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The Impact of Foreign Language Use on Business Talk

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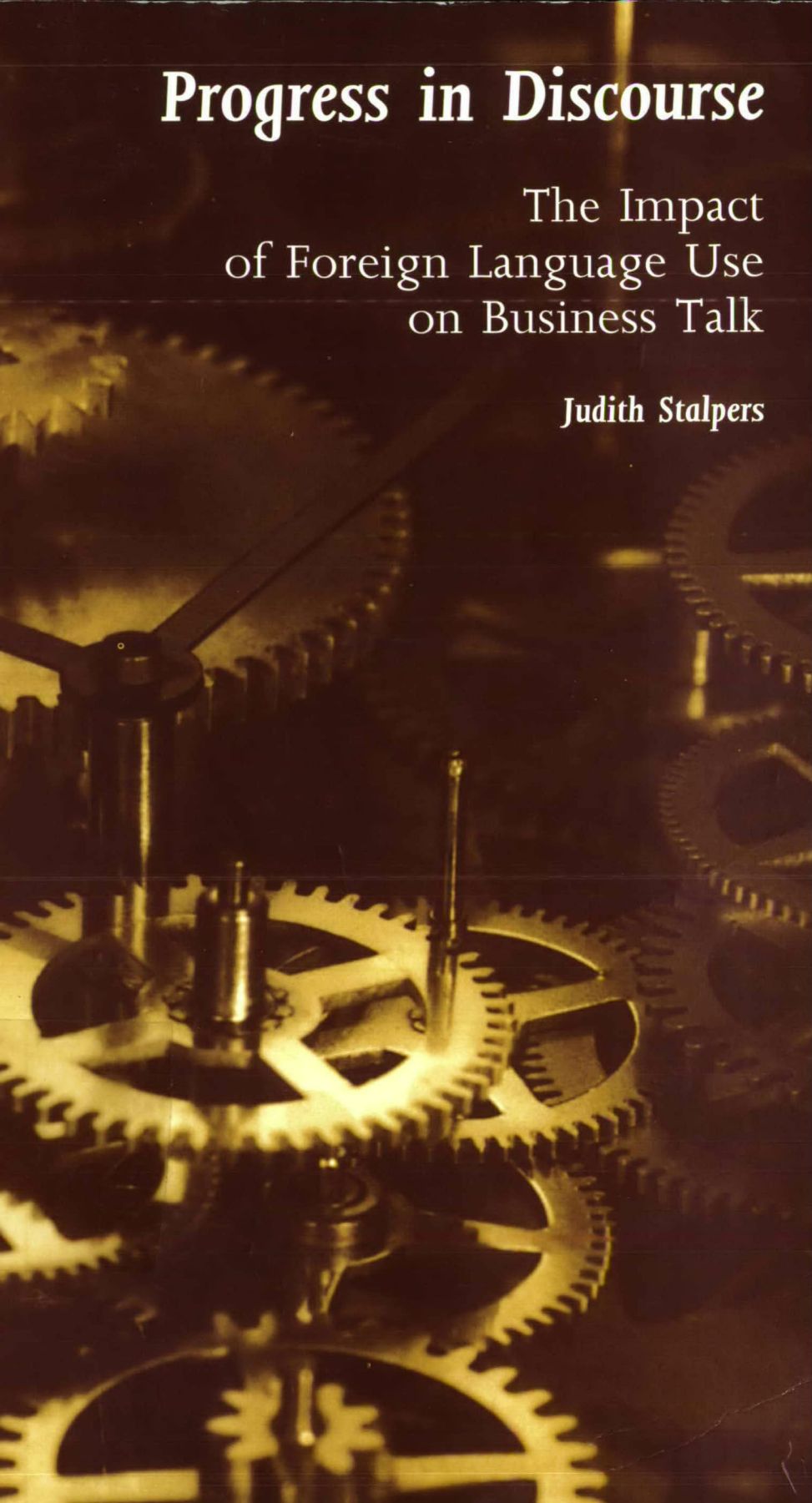

aan mijn ouders

PROGRESS IN DISCOURSE

The impact of foreign language use on business talk

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van
doctor aan de Katholieke Universiteit Brabant,
op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof. dr. L.F.W. de Klerk,
in het openbaar te verdedigen ten overstaan van
een door het college van dekanen aangewezen commissie
in de aula van de universiteit
op vrijdag 26 maart 1993 te 16.15 uur

door

Judith Maria Anna Stalpers

geboren te 's-Gravenhage

Promotoren: Prof. Dr. Leo G.M. Noordman
Prof. Dr. Jacob L. Mey
Copromotor: Dr. Gisela Redeker

Preface

Work involved in this dissertation has been carried out on three different continents. Not that the study as such required that much travelling. It was just due to the circumstances of my life. The bad thing was that distance probably was one factor why the writing process of the thesis took a long time. The good thing was, however, that my own experience made me more aware of the problem I was working on: How to deal with a foreign language with partners belonging to a foreign culture, while trying to make a living. On the one hand I was dealing with this problem in the ivory tower of academic research analyzing how other people were dealing with such a situation. On the other hand I was in such a situation myself.

I still experience these challenges on a daily basis and, to some extent, one gets addicted to it. The challenges and their results, whether successful or not, give one a feeling of enrichment and uniqueness. Many people contributed to enriching my life in connection with the thesis. I want to thank them for the opportunities, personal involvement, and patience they offered me.

Professor Konrad Ehlich, Dr. Guust Meyers, and Dr. Jan Ulijn hired me as an assistant for the research project 'Taal, Cultuur en Onderhandelen'. They gave me much freedom in carrying out this project, which, I hope, they do not regret. The project has been generously sponsored by the 'Samenwerkingsorgaan Brabantse Universiteiten', an organization that promotes research between Tilburg University and Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands.

After Konrad Ehlich had left Tilburg University, Professor Leo Noordman graciously took it upon himself to become my supervisor. His condition was that I had to find a specialist in the field of pragmatics or discourse analysis. Professor Jacob Mey kindly agreed. Both Leo Noordman and Jacob Mey have always been cooperative in dealing with the ever changing situations surrounding my life. It is thanks to their academic commitment and never lacking support and patience that this thesis finally sees the daylight.

The ultimate specialist in the team, Dr. Gisela Redeker has been a critical reader of the various versions of the thesis. Her scrutiny helped me to avoid many pitfalls and mistakes. There certainly remain many, of which I alone am responsible.

The whole research depended on the collaboration of business people. At the beginning of the research project we often despaired, because the indispensable recordings failed. But thanks to the direct or indirect efforts of Michael

Andrewes, André Dams, Anton Kleys, and others who wish to stay anonymous, the project survived.

I have also relied on many family members and friends regarding their expertise in the business world, statistics, word processing technics, or as native speakers of French or English. Especially Willem Remmelink and Danny Steinberg devoted much of their time to this thesis.

The two people whose lifes were affected most immediately by the work on this thesis, but who were, at the same time, the source of inspiration and motivation are Florian and Ulysses Coulmas. I wish we can enjoy the fruits of all the effort together.

Tokyo, January 1993

A note on transcription conventions

The audio-taped business conversations have been transcribed originally according to the HIAT convention (Ehlich & Rehbein 1976). This convention allows for a detailed representation of intonation, tone length, pace of speaking, and overlapping talk. The transcription in the examples throughout the chapters has been simplified in order to enhance readability. Spelling is in standard Dutch and French.

(0.5)	timed pauses measured in seconds and tenths of a second;
,	commas signify perceptible break in the flow of speech of less than 0.4 of a second;
.	full-stop indicates falling (final) tone;
?	question mark indicates rising (final) tone;
[	two square brackets indicate overlapping utterances
[	across speakers;
a::	colons indicate an extension of the sound or syllable it follows; more colons prolong the stretch of a sound;
(***)	bracketed asterisk(s) indicates sounds which cannot be identified; the number of asterisks inside the brackets indicate the number of unidentified syllables;
((LAUGHS))	double brackets contain relevant contextual information;
[!]	exclamation mark in square brackets indicates a mistake in the French of the Dutch speaker;
/ffou/	slashes contain letters representing the sounds of non-standard interjections or discourse markers;
**	asterisks indicate names of company, city, or product which have been eliminated; the number of asterisks correspond with the number of syllables.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Communication and international business talk

Verbal behavior is an integral part of communicative behavior. By means of speech people can pass on information to one another, they can carry out activities such as promising, warning, or asking, and they can coordinate social activities such as making friends, teaching, negotiating a deal, dining, etc. (Yngve 1986). A practical problem for all speakers is to communicate in the most effective way in order to achieve the goals they pursue with their activities. As we know from empirical studies of oral discourse,[1] competent interactants design their linguistic actions with great care in order to meet their interlocutors' needs as well as their own. In so doing, they attune their linguistic activities to the current context of the conversation. Building up a conversation is a highly collaborative process involving speakers and hearers, where the activities of both parties determine the structure. Communicating in a foreign language with partners having different cultural background is often an additional difficulty in effectively achieving conversational goals.

This study deals with international business negotiations, one type of communication situations where partners have different language and/or culture backgrounds. In such a situation, one or both of the parties concerned often have to use a foreign language. For objective, practical purposes, the participants in conversations of this sort are committed to achieve successful communication. There are good reasons to assume that in the business setting, participants are highly motivated to prevent difficulties in the communication process and to overcome them when such difficulties arise. Participants have an urgent need to avoid lack of precision and ambiguity, and to bring to a successful conclusion everything they have on their agenda.[2]

Little is known about how participants in business negotiations deal with the extra handicap of having to use a foreign language while pursuing their business goals; that is, how they find solutions for problems, make decisions, guarantee clarity, and avoid wasting their own and other's time (see Chapter 2). Business talk as a genre is different from talk in other cross-cultural settings,[3] because in principle - that is, if we disregard the economic weight of the companies represented - the parties involved enjoy equal social status and are highly dependent upon each other.

1.2 Focus: The use of a foreign language

Part of the present research was carried out within the context of a research project called "Negotiating Technical Business in a Cross-Cultural and Cross-Linguistic Setting." The aim of this project was to investigate the influence of language and culture differences on the communication process in international negotiations. It was expected that results from this investigation could be used to improve language and negotiation training courses. The project started out with the idea that insights from pragmatically oriented disciplines in linguistics such as conversation analysis, the ethnography of speaking, rhetoric, and text linguistics might supply the conceptual tools necessary for handling the cultural and linguistic differences that cause problems when speakers of different languages and cultures are trying to communicate. For the purposes of this project French and Dutch were chosen as languages; the reason for this choice was that commercial contacts between the two language groups seem to have decreased in recent years - a fact which is often attributed (wholly or in part) to the existence of a "linguistic and cultural barrier" between the two language groups (Gorter, Overhof, Free, Kemps, and Bos 1983).[4]

In this study, I want to avoid the question whether differences in verbal behavior are to be attributed to differences in culture. Instead, I will look at the problem from the perspective of foreign language use. The relation between culture and language structures is a perennial source of discussion and controversy (see Appel, Hubers, and Meijer 1976: 139), also in the field of pragmatics. On the one hand, discourse studies contrasting groups of native speakers of different languages suggest that cultural differences on the discourse level are minimal (Blum-Kulka 1987; Sajavaara & Lehtonen 1980, but see House & Kasper 1981 on politeness markers in role play); on the other hand, contrastive research on written language shows considerable differences in style and discourse patterns (Clyne 1987; Hinds 1983). Even though the present study may contribute to a better understanding of how differences in culture are reflected in language, this question has not been in the center of my attention.[5]

The present study focuses on how participants in an interlanguage setting overcome their foreign language problems and manage to keep the conversation on its tracks. Stated differently, how the participants collaborate in making the conversation progress. The analyses presented in Chapters 4 through 6 may help to clarify some of the more or less implicit assumptions on 'progress in discourse' which are current in the linguistic literature, especially with regard to the question of how the advance of discourse can be described and accounted for. In

Chapter 3, I consider the various notions of 'progress' as they are found in the linguistic literature, and I furnish a definition of the concept as I use it in this study. Further, the findings to be presented may explain the fact that business people perceive business conversations in international settings as slow-paced; these perceptions are described in Chapter 2. It is these perceptions and theoretical concerns that are behind the questions raised and the analyses applied in the present study.

1.3 Question: Does the use of a foreign language influence discourse structure?

By analyzing connected discourse, we can discover how the participants make the conversation *progress*: how they open a conversation and close it, how they introduce a topic and develop it, how they change the topic, how they build up a defense of a position, how they suggest proposals and counter-proposals, etc., in order to reach their communicative goals. In my research, I investigate whether the increased difficulties of using a foreign language are a potential cause of increased interactional work. In a nutshell, the question is whether, as compared to a monolingual context, business talk in an international setting requires a greater number of communicative acts for performing the same conversational tasks, such as changing the topic or concluding an argument. In order to answer this question, I examine business conversations of two kinds: (a) those involving native as well as non-native speakers (henceforth 'mixed' or 'interlanguage' conversations), and (b) those involving native speakers of one and the same language (henceforth 'native' or 'monolingual' conversations). The data consist of tape-recordings of actual sales negotiations between (1) native and non-native (i.e. Dutch) speakers of French, (2) native speakers of French, and (3) native speakers of Dutch. Chapter 2 provides a detailed description of the data, and the way they were collected.

My contrastive analyses concern three types of discourse sequences (or three types of conversational tasks), which I call 'topic change', 'completion', and 'disagreement'. Chapter 4 on topic change examines in some detail how the transition from one topic to another takes place, with special attention to cases of topic change which deviate from the described 'norm'. Chapter 5, on completion, deals with repair sequences, in which one speaker completes the utterance of another; it provides a description and analysis of the sequences of acts needed to carry out this meta-communicative activity. Chapter 6, on disagreement, provides a description of statement-disagreement sequences; it focuses on the use of 'mitigation' strategies in performing acts of disagreement.[6]

All three types of sequences contribute to what is perceived as a slowdown in topic talk: they represent portions of a conversation where, more often than not, the participants interrupt their topic talk in order to clarify what the talk is, or will be, about. Topic change, for instance, occurs at a moment when new goals have to be set; completion and disagreement represent moments of "goal failures and plan violations," which are interesting "because they represent situations occasioning strong affective responses and because they mark points of deviation from expectations" (Schank and Burstein 1985: 153). Weinrich (1982: 734) characterizes completion and disagreement as "disturbances in the flow of information." That is, in discourse, speakers try to present information in such a way that it can be integrated into the hearer's state of information (or background knowledge), and the hearer signals whether he or she can take up the information. When participants coordinate their activities in an appropriate way, the information flows undisturbedly (with participants constantly alternating between speaker and hearer roles). Disturbances occur when the information is not presented in a well-balanced fashion, that is, when information is provided which cannot be integrated.

From an interactional perspective, topic change, completion, and disagreement are problems for which the participants have to find a solution; only thus can they continue the conversation on the content level and pursue their substantive communicative goals. In other words, topic change, completion, and disagreement represent the (frequent) points in conversations where the smooth flow of information exchange is jeopardized, the participants being busy defining the communication situation, rather than talking on the content level; their talk is *meta-communicative* (Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson 1970: 46; Weinrich 1985: 13).

1.4 Objectives summarized

The focal questions in the three analyses (topic change, completion, and disagreement) are the following.

- Given the kinds of problems mentioned above, what kinds of acts do participants use in order to solve them?
- Are there any differences between native and mixed conversations in this respect?
- If yes, and if (as it turns out to be the case) the sequences in mixed conversations are longer than those in native conversations, how can such protracted solution sequences be accounted for?

This study is a micro-level sociolinguistic study, i.e., one that is characterized by "situations with modest numbers of individuals in small spaces involved in interaction through (relatively) brief periods" (Grimshaw 1987b: 70); its framework can best be described as 'linguistic discourse analysis'. Such analyses include "the accomplishment of social control, or the course and success or failure of conflict talk, or the presentation of identity displays, or the display of solidarity or the simultaneous achievement of several such ends in ongoing talk" (ibid.). Usually, discourse analysts describe the linguistic resources chosen by competent interactants to accomplish a limited interactional goal, making use of insights from a variety of disciplines, most importantly from philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and linguistics (Brown & Yule 1983: viii; Van Dijk 1985).

On the basis of my analyses, the costs and benefits of the observed slower pace of international business talk will be reconsidered (Chapter 7). Individual differences in the rate of progress can be expected in conversations between native speakers as well as in those involving non-native and native speakers. Clearly, the use of a foreign language is not the only factor influencing a conversation's progress. For instance, such progress can depend on the subject matter, the range of topics admissible in a given setting, the level of intimacy between the participants, differences in their personalities, etc. I have chosen to side-step these aspects in favor of pursuing the more general question of how progress in conversation is established, and whether and how it is affected by the use of a foreign language.

The analyses presented here will show how foreign language use can influence discourse structure, especially where business talk is concerned. By investigating the verbal aspects of negotiating, this study confines itself to linguistic territory. It hopes to contribute to a better understanding of a highly complicated activity, a comprehensive analysis of which has to take into account a variety of phenomena and theoretical perspectives. It should be stressed that the linguist's is only one of these.

2 WHAT IS BUSINESS TALK?

This chapter explores more deeply the interest of the business community in the problems of foreign language use, as voiced by people from that business community. First, I address the question of how business people perceive difficulties when using a foreign language (Section 2.1), that is, the slower pace and different style of international business talk as compared to native business talk. Next, I provide a basic definition of business talk, partly based on the non-linguistic, technical literature on business negotiations. Here it is suggested that business talk is a genuinely distinct type of discourse. This claim can only be substantiated, of course, by the analysis of empirical data (Section 2.2). Section 2.3 gives a description of such data and of the difficulties encountered in collecting them. The chapter's last section (2.4) describes the occurrence of pauses, the most evident source of slow-down of pace, in the data. This analysis does not show unequivocal differences between native and mixed discourse that could account for the perceived slow pace of international business talk. The observations presented in this chapter lead to the operationalization of the linguistic analyses in the sequel (see Chapter 3).

2.1 How business people perceive business talk involving foreign participants

2.1.1 Literature on international negotiations

In the literature on business negotiation, and on negotiation in general, language is seen as a tool rather than as a potential problem. Some authors, however, acknowledge that there are problems having to do with the use of a foreign language. One finds many anecdotal observations on the importance of foreign language skills for trade and business (see, e.g., Aivares Correa 1983, Bowen 1980, Lowe 1982). Beneke, in his study of foreign language use by German executive managers, has shown that in these managers' view, it is necessary to know several foreign languages in addition to English. The managers feel that knowing one's partner's language is especially important for one's appreciation by the foreign trade partner; knowledge of the language is a key to the culture of the people one wants to do business with (Beneke 1982). Another study (Holden 1986) has investigated the communicative behavior of representatives of British firms on overseas markets, and notes the negative economic consequences of language and communication barriers. Holden attributes these consequences to

the fact that British firms pay too little attention to training their staff in foreign languages. It is worth noting that the majority (75%) of Dutch companies provide special training courses for employees engaged in international business. 34% of these courses are language courses, 25% are management and sales seminars, and 15% negotiation seminars (Gorter et al. 1983: 25).

To the extent that writers of negotiation textbooks treat the use of foreign languages at all, they emphasize its relation to cultural differences. Two of the most articulate authors on this point are Dupont and Fisher. The former (Dupont 1982: 241) treats language as one of several cultural factors, such as legal and other regulations, professional and social habits, political environment, rites, taboos, and value systems. According to Dupont, cultural differences may have undesired effects in the form of hostility and lack of trust; in order to neutralize such effects, participants in international negotiations should adapt their communicative style and the structure of the negotiation itself. Unfortunately, as he does not furnish an explicit model, Dupont fails to show how communication style and negotiation structure can be adapted, and what they should be adapted to.

According to Fisher (1980), foreign language use in discourse may cause noise, that is, formally incorrect interpretations on either side causing communicative misses or disturbances (see further Chapter 3 on the notion of noise). Fisher's suggested solution to this problem is to offer, in addition to the language courses, introductions to the socio-cultural background of the languages studied. Like Dupont, Fisher feels that international negotiations should not necessarily conform to the linguistic and stylistic conventions of one party only; rather, they should aim for a more neutral style. Such a style could reduce the amount of noise, while avoiding the difficulties resulting from rigidly upholding native usage conventions.

2.1.2 Interviews with business people

As we will see below, the business people themselves, when using a foreign language, realize that language problems can and will occur. During the data collection phase, 34 Dutch and eight French business people were interviewed. The interviews had a double purpose: first, to obtain permission to make recordings; second, to get an idea of how business people experience the use of a foreign language when doing business. The various experiences they reported in these interviews helped to focus attention on certain phenomena assumed to be relevant to the present research. The interviews themselves are based on a previous survey, which investigated the roles played by language and culture in business negotiations (Gorter et al. 1983). I have used questions from this survey

as guidelines during the interviews. I have focused in particular on the language difficulties experienced in French-Dutch encounters.

What was most frequently mentioned in these interviews (both with Dutch and with French business people) was that choosing a foreign language as one's medium of communication had a palpable effect, not so much on the content of the conversation as on its pace and style. The interviewees attributed the perceived differences to two factors. First of all, conversations involving non-fluent speakers of a language proceed more slowly, and therefore are more time-consuming; and secondly, non-native speakers fail to distinguish between the language's finer nuances. The interviewees who experienced the use of a foreign language as a handicap referred to the slow pace as irritating, tiring, and expensive. As to problems of wording, these were felt to make the conversation impersonal and stiff; as a result, the atmosphere of the conversation became unpleasant. Many of the interviewees perceived these two factors as interrelated; for others slowness was a grammatical and lexical problem only: finding alternative expressions or the correct grammatical constructions takes time. Additional factors (also mentioned by some of the interviewees) that contribute to the slow pace of international business conversations include culturally determined different ways of speaking.

A slower pace attributed to insufficient linguistic skills was generally seen as a hindrance to business relations with foreigners, both on the individual and company levels. Negotiating partners get tired and irritated; for their companies this means additional expense in terms of staff-hours.

However, not all interviewees experienced the use of a foreign language as a handicap. Some, while acknowledging the slower pace in foreign language discourse, considered it a matter of practice and experience. As one Dutch interviewee put it, "Language is a vehicle. You become aware of the problem, and then you overcome it as you become more experienced ... Experience is the observation of recurrent patterns." Others saw the foreign language as something which could be put to use in the negotiation strategy, for instance as a means of gaining time under the pretense of language problems.

Thus, while there was general agreement about the impact of a foreign language on the conversation, not all interviewees agreed on it being a problem: some felt constrained by the interactional characteristics resulting from foreign language use, whereas others were aware of the need to adjust their communicative behavior without perceiving this as necessarily negative. We do not know to what extent differences in personality and experience are involved here; at least some of the interviewees seem to have adjusted to using a foreign language, even in complicated business settings (some even to the extent that they did no longer perceive the foreign language as an extra burden).

If, indeed, business conversations among native speakers proceed at a faster pace, then one should be able to show that verbal encounters between e.g. Frenchmen and Dutchmen are perceptibly slower than comparable native Dutch and native French encounters. To test the assumption that this is not just due to a slower rate of speaking, we need a detailed analysis of how the participants solve particular interactional problems in order to continue substantial topic talk. Such analyses will be presented in Chapters 4 through 6.

2.2 Definition of business talk

A negotiation takes place whenever two or more parties decide to allocate access to, or possession of, goods by other means than by imposing physical or judicial authority (Anzieu 1974; Rubin & Brown 1975). This description reflects the most basic aspect of negotiation. Other definitions found in the negotiation literature are more sophisticated (e.g. Bellenger 1984; Dupont 1982; Fisher & Ury 1981; Karrass 1970; Pruitt 1983; Walton & McKersie 1965; Zartman 1978, among others), in that they try to capture the complex character of the negotiation process and the uniqueness of each negotiation. These definitions stress at least several of the following characteristics.

Whenever two parties have both shared and conflicting interests concerning the exchange of goods, they engage in negotiation in order to reach agreement. The parties are thus oriented towards a very specific goal, but they do not know what the outcome of their activity will be, because at each step of the negotiation they depend on each other's decisions.

In modern industrial societies, negotiating is an intrinsically verbal activity (Anzieu 1974), in which different types of activities, such as persuading, decision making, instructing, and conflict resolving, are interchanged and mixed. The activities can be described as problem solving in a broad sense (Dieckmann & Paul 1983: 192), that is, the search for an effective and mutually satisfying arrangement in which the parties involved make use of their power relationships, their personal interests, and their mutual interdependence.

Although the exchange of goods is the ultimate aim, it is the exchange of information which is central to a negotiation: opponents exchange information in order to influence the other's behaviors and beliefs, and to achieve a result. In other words, the exchange of information is viewed as a part of the economic system in which the negotiators work.[1]

In negotiation theories and in the handbooks, the term 'negotiation' covers different areas of social life, such as business, labor, justice, and diplomacy (see Van den Bergh (1985) for an overview).[2] In general, 'negotiation' refers to a

multi-faceted process, which may go on for several years, from the first contact with the other party to the conclusion of the deal. It involves sending back and forth material, preparing and conducting face-to-face and telephone conversations with the opponents, meeting colleagues of one's own party, (re)drafting the contract, and so forth. Meetings with the other party are usually seen as the core part of the negotiation, because during these meetings the most difficult points are discussed and the ground is prepared for final decisions.

In this study I use the term 'business talk' for conversations taking place in the context of meetings between potential buyers and sellers, each representing some company. The purpose of the conversations is to negotiate a deal. The complexity that is typical of the negotiation process as a whole also characterizes each individual instance of business talk (Dupont 1982: 174-176). We can, therefore, assume that this complexity will make business talk different from other kinds of conversation and that it is thus important to collect realistic data.

2.3 The data: Some methodological problems of data collection

It is a sociolinguistic commonplace that in matters of language use, self-reports are notoriously unreliable. That does not mean that self-reports are useless, but other sources of information have to be drawn on in order to substantiate, correct, and supplement the information that can be obtained from self-reports. Through the analysis of actual verbal behavior of business people, business talk can be made into an object of linguistic study. Two sources are available: simulated and real life settings. Gordon et al. (1984) point out that outcomes from laboratory research are contradicted by studies on actual negotiations, because in real negotiations a wider range of behavior is employed. Obviously this is so, since important factors influencing behavior are absent in simulations. To mention two: a) there are no real costs and benefits involved, let alone judicial consequences; b) simulations lack the important aspect of (relying on, creating, and/or continuing) a long term relationship. It is for this reason that, in order to obtain an accurate impression of the verbal behavior of business people, I opted for the analysis of authentic business talk.

Collecting the data was a time-consuming process mainly due to two factors. First, business talk is seen as a closed, confidential activity the details of which are not meant to be released beyond the negotiation setting. Second, according to the business people, the negotiation process is open to all sorts of influences: economic factors, personalities of the people involved, the physical environment, such as the room and table setting, etc. Therefore, the presence of a tape-recorder and/or a researcher is an unwelcome additional element.[3] In order to get permis-

sion to make recordings, I first had to build up confidence by explaining the academic motivation for wishing to witness actual negotiations. Then, after it had been agreed on in principle to have a conversation recorded, some time went by before the appropriate occasion offered itself. In the meantime, the relationship with the businessperson had to be maintained, which in effect meant that I had to remind him or her of our agreement from time to time without making too much of a nuisance of myself. It was then up to the businessperson to decide which session would be recorded and whether or not I could be present. Some business people seemed to prefer to do the recording in my absence, because it would be easier then not to release the tape in the event that it contained information they did not want to be made public, even for academic purposes. In business negotiations the time between the first contact and the conclusion of the deal often spans many months; similarly, the period between my first contacts with the business people and the making of the recording often took more than two years. The contacts that failed to yield any positive results were much more numerous than those that did. That I was able, after all, to make relatively many recordings was a matter of persistence; I was wholly dependent on the goodwill and confidence of the business people who agreed to cooperate. Thus, the corpus of recordings on which this study is based, even though it may not be a representative sample in the statistical sense, is rather unique. To date, not many researchers have succeeded in getting access to comparable data (cf. the reports by, e.g., Rehbein (1989), Wagner (1990), Wagner & Peterson (1988); but see for successful attempts Firth (1990) and Lampi (1990)).

My analyses are based on eleven conversations, which amount to almost 5 hours of recordings:[4] three conversations between native speakers of Dutch; four conversations between native speakers of French; and four conversations in French between native speakers of French and Dutchmen speaking French. (These conversations are hence referred to as 'Dutch-Dutch' or 'D-D', 'French-French' or 'F-F', and 'French-Dutch' or 'F-D' conversations, respectively.) In all conversations, company representatives talk with each other, not with (a) potential consumer(s). The eleven conversations differ considerably in length of time, topic, setting (face-to-face versus telephone), size of the company, and scale of the deal (moneywise). Table 2.1 gives a systematic overview of the 11 conversations. In the remainder of this section, I will give a brief characterization of each conversation, in which I describe the relationship between the participants and the topic of the negotiation. In Table 2.1 and in the examples given in the following chapters, the conversations are referred to by their codes.[5]

The conversations have been transcribed in standard French and standard Dutch spelling in order to enhance readability. But I have recorded hesitations, false starts, interjections, and Dutchmen's mistakes in their French. The names of

the companies, products, cities, and participants have been changed. Transcription conventions are explained on page vii.

Table 2.1: Systematic overview of the 11 conversations

code	*length*	*subject matter*	*setting*
Dutch-Dutch conversations			
DD-1	31 minutes	restaurant	face-to-face
DD-2	34 minutes	land	face-to-face
DD-T10	24 minutes	trucks	telephone
French-French conversations			
FF-1	31 minutes	jeans	face-to-face
FF-T10	4 minutes	plastic bags	telephone
FF-T11	11 minutes	invitation card	telephone
FF-T12	11 minutes	poster campaign	telephone
French-Dutch conversations			
FD-1	75 minutes	medical instrument	face-to-face
FD-2	28 minutes	wine	face-to-face
FD-3	26 minutes	medicated food	face-to-face
FD-T11	16 minutes	cattle feed	telephone

2.3.1 Description of the Dutch-Dutch conversations

DD-1 Restaurant

Participants: K = Klaas, owner of building
S = Stan de Zon, restaurant owner
C = Cora de Zon, restaurant owner's wife

The owner of a building, Klaas, visits his tenants to discuss a new lease contract. The tenants have a small restaurant in the building. They want to redecorate the restaurant and they want the option to buy the building. The tenants have been renting the space for many years. The owner and tenants have known each other from childhood.

DD-2 Land

Participants: G = Giesberts, mediator between the two negotiating parties
A = Azuur, representative of BV, owners of a plot of land
N = van Nunen, representative of BV
Y = Ysselstein, owner of a construction firm
E = Elsink, director of the construction firm

F = Fijen, architect working for the construction firm

This is the first meeting between the sellers of a plot of land in a big Dutch city and a potential buyer. The two parties have been brought together through Mr. Giesberts. The sellers have sent a proposal contract, to which the potential buyer has reacted negatively. The buyer wants a contract without inheriting any obligations. There are buildings on the land, which must be demolished if the municipality so desires. This is one of the difficult points in the discussion.

DD-T10 (I, II, III, IV, V) Trucks

Participants: A = Arie Laroche, from truck parts company OOSTROM
F = Frans Vergouw, owner of a truck repair shop
J = Jaap, assistant to Vergouw
S = secretary

This is a series of five telephone conversations between a producer of spare parts for trucks (OOSTROM) and his customer, a truck seller (Vergouw). Vergouw places several orders. OOSTROM, however, does not want to deliver before the back payments have been paid. OOSTROM and Vergouw are business partners of long standing.

2.3.2 Description of the French-French conversations

FF-1 Jeans

Participants: V = representative of a big clothing company
R = owner of a clothing shop

The representative pays a visit to one of the retail shops, which he does twice a year. The participants know each other quite well. They discuss the winter collection and decide on different items, and in what quantities, to be purchased by the shop owner.

FF-T10 Plastic bags

Participants: S = secretary of B.
G = Edwin Goglin, publicity agent
B = VanderBilt, G's client

Goglin, an agent of the publicity agency A POINT, calls a plastic bag company to order additional plastic bags and to change the time schedule of a publicity campaign. There has been an error in the number of plastic bags available in the stores which participate in the campaign.

FF-T11 Invitation card

Participants: S = secretary of A

G = Edwin Goglin, publicity agent
A = Mme Asselin, client of Goglin

Goglin, an agent of the publicity agency A POINT, calls his client. He talks with one of the assistants, Mme Asselin. The conversation is about two different campaigns. For the first one, Goglin has finished a text which he wants to send his client for inspection. For the second campaign, he needs a text from Mme Asselin's boss, Mr. Küster, which, so far, Mr. Küster has failed to deliver. Moreover, it is difficult to get in touch with him. Goglin wonders what he should do.

FF-T12 Budget
Participants: S = secretary of L
G = Edwin Goglin, publicity agent
L = Mme Legrand, G's client

Edwin Goglin from the publicity agency A POINT calls a poster company to ask for an estimate of costs for a new order in Eastern France. He talks with one of the assistants, Mme Legrand. They discuss several points concerning the poster campaign. After the settlement of Goglin's request, Mme Legrand asks about the outcome of another order. A POINT has given the order to another poster company. Mme Legrand's company has not been told.

2.3.3 Description of the French-Dutch conversations

FD-1 Medical instrument
Participants: F = French laboratory head
N = Dutch representative of BOUHUYS, a medical instruments compan
G = director of a hospital
H = a colleague of F.

The Dutch sales representative visits the hospital, where he talks with the head of the laboratory section. The hospital wants to buy a new instrument for blood analyses, but they want other payment conditions than the ones stated in the Dutch company's offer. The offer was sent a few months earlier, after N's first visit to the hospital. This conversation takes place on N's second visit, following a request by the hospital.

FD-2 Wine
Participants: N = Dutch wine importer
C = owner of a winery and cellars
J = student accompanying N
F = one of C's employees
G = one of C's employees

A Dutch importer of wine is exploring the Bourgogne and Beaujolais regions for new wines. He visits C's cellars for the first time, without having made an appointment.

FD-3 Medicated food
Participants: F = French representative of the pharmaceutical company PHARM
N = Dutch purchaser of cattle feed
M = N's colleague
A French representative of a chemical company visits a Dutch cattle feed company. This is F's first visit. The visit has been postponed several times. F offers a veterinary drug. The Dutch company is already buying a similar product from another firm, but F's product is cheaper. The Dutch company is bound to the strict Dutch legislation and cannot buy the product unless it is officially registered.

FD-T11 Cattle feed
Participants: D = Dutch purchaser of cattle feed
F = French seller of cattle feed
A Dutch representative of a cattle feed company calls his French supplier. They have known each other for years and have a stable and good relationship. The Dutchman wants to change the shipment of the current order because of weather conditions. He wants to send the merchandise by train rather than by boat. This involves renegotiating quantities and prices.

2.4 The amount of pauses in business talk

This section reports a quantitative test of the hypothesis that the perceived slowness of cross-linguistic negotiations (as reported in Section 2.1) is due to increased pausing. It is generally assumed that pauses increase in number and length when difficulties (linguistic, cognitive, or social) occur (Clark & Clark 1977: 261-273). Native and mixed conversations could thus differ in pace due to the extent of pausing. Therefore, an analysis of pauses occurring in the data was carried out. The results are summarized in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. All silent pauses were counted and measured with a stop watch.[6] It should be noted that pauses in the French-Dutch settings are more or less equally divided among the French and the Dutch participants.

Table 2.2: Overview of silent pauses in three types of conversations.

	D-D	F-F	F-D
Total conversation duration in minutes	97.92	55.95	134.57
Total pausing duration in minutes	12.10	3.83	21.42
Total pausing duration as percentage of conversation time	12.36	6.84	15.92
Number of pauses per conversation minute	10.4	8.7	11.9

The amount of pausing time in percentage of total conversation time is highest in the French-Dutch setting (15.9%), compared to the native Dutch and native French settings (12.4% and 6.8%, respectively); in addition, the difference between native Dutch and mixed discourse is much smaller than between native French and mixed discourse. The time spent on pauses correlates with the average number of pauses per conversation minute. That is to say that the mixed settings also have the highest ratio (11.9 pauses per minute). Again the difference to the native Dutch setting (with 10.4 pauses per conversation minute) is smaller than the difference to the native French setting (with 8.7 pauses per conversation minute). Thus, a first look at these data supports the hypothesis (based on the business people's perception) that more time is used for pausing in the French-Dutch conversations than in the native settings.

Table 2.3: Distribution of pauses with different lengths over the three types of conversations.

	Frequency of occurrence of pauses					
	D-D		F-F		F-D	
	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%
Length of pauses in seconds						
- 0.4	(349)	34.2	(304)	62.2	(531)	33.2
0.5 - 0.8	(404)	39.6	(140)	28.6	(591)	37.0
0.9 - 1.2	(147)	14.4	(29)	5.9	(244)	15.3
1.3 - 1.6	(72)	7.1	(9)	1.8	(104)	6.5
1.7 - 2.0	(26)	2.6	(6)	1.2	(43)	2.7
2.1 and over	(23)	2.3	(1)	0.2	(86)	5.4
Total	(1021)	100.2	(489)	99.9	(1599)	100.1

The distribution of pauses over different lengths shows a statistically significant difference between the mixed and the native Dutch settings (15.9% vs 12.4%; chi-square (df = 5) = 16.56, $p < .05$; see Table 2.3).[7] However, in terms of overall importance, the difference is minimal: the differences occur only for the category of longest pauses (2.1 seconds and above). A chi-square analysis over this category (chi-square (df = 1) = 15.27) shows a significant difference ($p < .001$). For this reason, the difference between mixed and native Dutch discourse in overall pausing time is to be attributed to the higher frequency of very long pauses in the mixed discourse.

Mixed and native Dutch discourse both differ significantly from the native French conversation in their distribution of pauses over different lengths. Chi-square analysis over the native Dutch vs native French, yields $p < .001$ (chi-square (df = 5) = 119.39), and over native French vs mixed discourse $p < .001$ (chi-square (df = 5) = 153.40). As Table 2.3 shows, almost two thirds of the pauses (62.2%) in the native French discourse last 0.4 seconds or less (contrasting with one third in both native Dutch and mixed discourse), and there are hardly any pauses longer than 1.3 seconds in the native French discourse (only 3.2%).

On the basis of these data, there seems to be some evidence for the business people's perception that more time is used for pauses in the mixed conversations than in the native settings. Since differences in the overall pausing pattern (pausing time, frequency per minute, and frequency distribution) between native French and mixed discourse are more clearly articulated than those between native Dutch and mixed discourse, the data tend to confirm the French, rather than the Dutch business people's perceptions of slower pace in international business talk. However, as we do not know exactly which features form such perceptions, one should be careful in disregarding even modest differences. It may be the case that long pauses have a greater impact on perception forming than short pauses.

If it were the difficulties involved in using a foreign language that are responsible for an increase in pauses, one would expect the biggest difference in pausing behavior to occur between native Dutch and mixed settings, rather than between native French and mixed settings: in mixed conversations the Dutchmen speak a foreign language, whereas native French speakers use their own. However, as the results of my investigation show, differences in pausing behavior between native Dutch and mixed conversations are relatively small, contrary to our expectations. This would suggest that in order to account for the participants' perceptions of certain kinds of discourse, other discourse features might be responsible in addition to pauses. I have, therefore, opted for an analysis that stresses the qualitative aspects, in particular as regards the identification of structural features in the sequencing of communicative acts. As we

will see, these analyses show that what the mixed setting necessitates is not a greater cognitive, but mainly a more collaborative effort.

2.5 Summary

The present chapter has given an overview of how international business talk is viewed in the non-linguistic literature and by experienced business people. According to these sources, international business negotiations have characteristics which differ from domestic business negotiations. Differences are felt to be most conspicuous in the style and pace of discourse: international business talk is perceived as progressing at a slower pace than domestic business talk. This chapter furthermore has provided a description of the data used in the analyses to be presented in Chapters 4 through 6. An analysis of the occurrence of so-called silent pauses in the data suggests that the perceived slower pace in international business talk cannot simply be attributed to more and/or longer pauses in the international setting. This result favors including other, more qualitative features in the attempt to account for the differences between native and mixed settings. The analysis I am going to propose in the following will look at the two sets of conversations in terms of the sequencing of communicative acts.

3 LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

Although the business people in the interviews reported in Chapter 2 paraphrase the effect of using a foreign language in terms of time (see page 8 above), it is obvious that we cannot take this too literally. For instance, elaborating on a topic can be time-consuming, but in the long run such an 'investment' may result in a better deal. Thus, improving interlingual business talk should not just result in saved time, making conversations as short as possible; the point is to make them more efficient. It is not the length of a conversation as such that bothers business people; rather, as I will argue in this chapter, it is its pace in terms of 'perceived progress'. That is, the partners are not so much concerned with the absolute amount of time spent as with the time they have to spend *in order to cover a certain ground*; that is, the expenditure of time is always seen as relative to achieving a certain end.

Functionally oriented views on connected discourse either implicitly or explicitly recognize the concept of 'progress in discourse' (see Section 3.1); often such a concept, in one way or another, is related to (perceived) time. The present chapter outlines the theoretical background for, and the assumptions underlying the notion of progress; these provide the orientation for the analyses presented in Chapters 4 through 6. The chapter also introduces the terminology used (Section 3.2), and concludes with a review of studies of discourse analysis applied to foreign language use (Section 3.3). Basing myself on the results of these studies, and on the theoretical background presented in this chapter, I expect discourse structures of mixed conversations to exhibit a higher degree of redundancy, explicitness, and simplicity than native conversations. The resulting structures may well account for the perceived slower pace in international business talk.

3.1 Progress: A linguistic concept

Discourse is assumed to have directionality (Grice 1975: 45): it goes forward. Linguists discuss this forward direction of discourse from two goals that participants pursue: (1) to assure information transfer; and (2) to advance discourse topics. Although not strictly distinct, these two goals correspond to two levels of discourse organization, i.e., the local or utterance level, and the global or discourse level. Also the goals are related to each other in the sense that interlocutors exchange information about a particular topic (Weinrich 1982: 734). It should be noted that information transfer is not the only goal of verbal exchange. Language

is used for transferring propositional[1] information, as well as for purposes of interpersonal rapport (cf. Bühler 1934), among others. It is quite common for human linguistic behavior to realize various functions at the same time. The explanation is that, in addition to being information exchangers, participants are members of a social community who use linguistic structures to consolidate their place in that community. Also, participants choose their linguistic strategies taking into consideration the possibilities and constraints of both their interlocutors' and their own cognitive processes. Furthermore, utterances are designed to give structure to the entire text. The function of each utterance (and even smaller units, as will become clear during the analyses) can be described relative to its immediate predecessors and successors, as well as relative to larger discourse units, such as topics, repair sequences, etc. Thus, each discourse unit (whether an utterance or a sequence of utterances), simultaneously functions at several levels: information transfer, interpersonal relationships, textual coherence, and easing cognitive processing. Moreover, how an utterance works on one particular level can sometimes be described in terms of multiple functions: local and global organization, short-term and long-term interpersonal relationships, individual and group relationships, and so on, depending on the details and focus of the analysis. This pursuance of multiple goals gives rise to a variety of linguistic solutions for a particular discourse task. In the following subsections, I will present different approaches that furnish explanations of the use of different linguistic forms for fulfilling the same discourse task. I will argue that, implicitly or explicitly, these approaches measure or evaluate these forms from the point of view of information transfer, and attribute preference to the shortest, or quickest solution.

3.1.1 Progress and the assurance of information transfer

Considering the local level of discourse, that is, the utterance level, discourse is basically looked at from the perspective of information exchange. Two parties engage in discourse when they want to reduce their differences in available information; in other words, they want to expand their common ground. Through verbal exchange, participants can equalize their respective information about a particular topic (Weinrich 1982: 734). In the information exchange perspective, the goal of the participants is that a discourse progresses, when the interlocutors come closer to the equalization of information availability.

However, if information were transferred most quickly (in the shortest linguistic form possible), chances are that interlocutors would not understand each other. This is so because noise occurs in all communication and causes a certain distortion of the message. The concept of noise is taken here "to include any source of distortion or misunderstanding, whether this be attributable to the

imperfect performance of the speaker and hearer or to the acoustic conditions of the physical environment in which the utterances are produced" (Lyons 1968: 89). In order to avoid or reduce disturbances caused by noise, participants make use of certain strategies. One of these has been described as 'redundancy' (cf. Weinrich 1982: 77), another as 'grounding' (cf. Clark & Schaefer 1989a).

3.1.1.1 Redundancy

Verbal messages always contain a number of redundant elements. Without a certain redundancy, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to recover information from messages distorted by noise. In information theory, redundancy as well as informativeness are regarded as necessary features of verbal material in order to ease processing. Redundancy in language use is recognized on the levels of phonemes, morphemes, words, and speech acts (cf. Householder 1971: 40; Martinet 1962: 167-169). The phenomenon of redundancy is not directly related to progress or forward direction in discourse; usually, it is described in terms of the economy of linguistic behavior. Whatever the linguistic unit concerned, redundancy makes messages longer than strictly necessary (from an economic point of view), and thus increases 'discourse time', again strictly speaking, as compared to non-redundant messages. However, without the redundant elements, communication would break down or would become more elaborate in order to solve the miscommunications otherwise prevented, but at the same time participants try to reduce as far as possible these redundant elements (Martinet 1962: 167).

3.1.1.2 Grounding

Disturbances are also prevented or reduced by a process called 'grounding', that is, placing the content of each utterance among participants' shared beliefs.[2] According to Clark and Schaefer, "[t]ogether, the participants bear the mutual responsibility of assuring that what is said has been heard and understood before the conversation goes on" (1989a: 124). It is assumed, therefore, that every utterance will be grounded. This can be done implicitly, but often additional utterances are required, as, for instance, in repairs, where 'repair' is taken as an activity dealing with problems of speaking, hearing, and understanding (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977).[3] Clark and Schaefer acknowledge at several places in their work that this extra work involved in grounding stalls the conversation. For example, in the above quote, reference is made to other work that needs to be done "before the conversation goes on." Similarly, citing Wilkes-Gibbs (1986), they state that "[t]he conversation continues" after a repair sequence (1989b: 288). They claim that a "conversation proceeds at two levels" (1989a: 124), that is, on the level of topical content and on the level of content-

grounding. Yet, it is obvious that it is the topical content level which they consider the important one, in the sense that it is here that the conversation has its rationale.

The sequences of utterances needed for grounding the information may vary in length. While 'grounding theory' does not explicitly say that the shorter the exchanges needed for grounding, the sooner the conversation "goes on," a principle is postulated which implies such a view: participants in a conversation adhere to the so-called "principle of least collaborative effort." The work by speakers and addressees is oriented towards minimizing "the time a potential misunderstanding is on the floor," and "the number of exchanges needed before mutual acceptance [of the information]" (Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs 1986: 27). In a different context, Bremer et al. (1988: 251) state that repair sequences can differ in quality, in the sense that "the clearer and *faster* the resolution of problems with understanding, the more successful the interaction is likely to be rated" (1988: 252, emphasis mine).

From these various remarks on repairs and grounding in general, we can conclude that the extra work involved in grounding is considered to disturb the flow of discourse. Furthermore, participants are interested in minimizing such disturbances in order to proceed as quickly as possible with topic talk.

With respect to both redundancy and grounding, the pace of progress in terms of information transfer is related to the amount of time that is needed to achieve information transfer, as well as to how much linguistic material is involved in the transfer. Both redundancy and grounding are supposed to be necessary for successful communication. The two strategies manifest that participants are oriented towards error prevention rather than error correction. But participants are also concerned with limiting their work expenditure in order to make the conversation progress as quickly as possible. This will become even more evident in the discussion of theoretical approaches in Section 3.1.3.

3.1.2 Progress and the advancement of discourse topics

Information exchange always occurs with respect to a particular discourse topic, which most often takes stretches of talk longer than a single sentence. Although 'discourse topic' is "the most frequently used, unexplained, term in the analysis of discourse" (Brown & Yule 1983: 70), it is often seen as the central organizing principle for an extended stretch of discourse. More specifically, discourse "appears to be organized by topics which [the participants] take turns pushing forward by means of subtopics and the sharing and comparing of views" (Yngve 1970: 575). The forward movement of discourse topics can vary in pace, or even come to a complete standstill, as is evidenced by the following observations.

Grosz and Sidner (1986: 192) argue that interruptions (such as talk to another person about another topic, digressions, and flashbacks) break the normal flow of discourse. Participants return to the interrupted discourse after a break; this "is an effect of the normal progress of a conversation" (ibid.). Clyne (1987: 215) observes variations in "discourse tempo;" he ascribes these variations to the organization of (sub)topics itself. Comparing English and German academic texts, he claims that there is intercultural variation in "discourse tempo," as measured by the degree of linearity of a text, that is, among other things, the number and length of digressions from topics and subtopics. Gumperz, Aulakh, and Kaltman (1982) make a similar observation with regard to British English vs Indian English topic progression: "Indian English discourse is frequently judged by Western speakers to be loose, illogical, and *slow*, i.e., lacking in adequate structural clarity" (Gumperz et al. 1982: 56, emphasis mine). From Coulthard's remarks (1977: 79) about topic conflicts (two speakers wanting to develop a topic in different ways), we can infer that conversations not only can come to a halt, but that "[o]nce this competition [about a topic] has been resolved the conversation moves forward again." Topic progression is said to be disturbed by repairs of mistakes and misunderstandings. For instance, as Johnston (1985: 87) puts it: "when partners intend to collaborate on a common topic, the forward momentum of a conversation can be hindered by a variety of miscalculations ... The partners then cooperate in repairing the breakdown." Van Els, Bongaerts, Extra, Van Os, and Janssen-van Dieten (1984: 100) similarly report that "[corrections by another speaker] often begin a sequence of conversation which has the effect of interrupting what has been said prior to the [correction]." And Schiffrin considers a repair as "achiev[ing] information transition anaphorically" (1987: 74); in her view, a repair moves the focus of the conversation backward ("anaphorically"), rather than forward.

Thus, topics can be disrupted and if so, then the forward movement of discourse as a whole is seen to be hampered. The point of departure of linguistic descriptions is a linear sequence of wholly treated topics.

3.1.3 How to describe progress?

The bottom line of any functional account of discourse is that people engage in discourse in an organized way by exchanging information which takes them to particular goals, having to do with information transfer, easing cognitive processing, social relationships, and textual coherence. While differing in their account of the interpretation of linguistic actions used to achieve these goals, all approaches assume the existence of a means-end-relationship between discourse contributions and their functions. In the following subsections, I will sketch two important lines of thought which account for this multifunctionality of dis-

course. On the one hand there are approaches which explain the multi-functionality of discourse in terms of social organization, while other approaches, on the other hand, do so in terms of rationality principles. For my analyses both lines of thought are useful, because, as I will show in the following, the theories assume a kind of efficiency principle in discourse, sometimes explicitly expressed in terms of time expenditure, sometimes in terms of the amount of linguistic material involved in communicating. According to these theories, participants in general are oriented toward efficient communication. As regards my data, I will argue that, because of their concern with pace of progress, business people tend to shape their own behavior in discourse in a way which (they think) is efficient. Whenever there are obvious options between more or less efficient ways of handling a certain discourse task, they are likely to prefer the more efficient solution.

In the following two approaches, the variety of forms used by participants for conveying a particular message is explained on the basis of the shortest form. Longer forms are then described and interpreted against this background. These descriptions focus on the dynamics of the communication process. As a matter of fact, these are the two lines of thought that are most influential in present-day discourse analysis (cf. Grimshaw 1987b; Schiffrin 1987; Van Dijk 1985).

3.1.3.1 Social organization

Both the approach known as 'conversational analysis' and the line of sociolinguistic research represented by Gumperz (1978, 1982a) argue that the function of an utterance is only partly determined by its linguistic form and the social setting in which it occurs; to a large extent, this function depends on its location in a sequence of utterances, and on the outcome of a process through which speakers and listeners jointly establish an interpretation[4] while conversing. The description of linguistic patterns precedes an interpretation or explanation in terms of social organization, social identity, etc.

More specifically, conversational analysis is concerned with reconstructing the "members' methods of practical reasoning" on the basis of actually occurring data (Pomerantz & Atkinson 1984: 284). By means of micro-level analyses, conversational analysts provide functional explanations of the participants' procedures and expectations in terms of (1) the problems that are solved by the devices used, and (2) the problems that the organization of conversation raises at each step. They restrict their attention to recurrent structural patterns of conversation and study in this way the 'preferred organization' of social interaction. Of importance for my analyses is the notion of preference organization, as it implies a preference for short, unmarked, forms. Marked (which implies longer) forms, however, are not seen as deviant, but as fulfilling particular non-referential

functions (cf. Levinson 1983: Chapter 6). The notion of repair as discussed in Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 also originated in conversational analysis. The extent to which repair is considered to hamper the forward direction of a conversation was discussed in those sections.

As to Gumperz' work, it focuses on cultural differences regarding the use of particular linguistic devices, called "contextualization conventions" (Gumperz 1982a), and comprising intonation, stress, rhythm, contrastive shifts of phonetic values, and paralinguistic features (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz 1982: 17), as well as discourse markers (Schiffrin 1987), back channel behavior (Akinnasso & Seabrook-Ajirotutu 1982), and the sequencing of communicative acts into larger speech exchanges (Mishra 1982; Tannen & Öztek 1981). Together with grammar and lexicon, contextualization conventions function in "monitoring the progress of conversational interaction," of which "the basic assumption is that something is being communicated" (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz 1982: 18). From actual analyses (as in, for instance, Gumperz 1982b), we can infer that this "something" mostly is propositional information (but, in principle, this needs not be the case), which is contextualized by means of the above-mentioned contextualization devices. Contextualization conventions are cues to the hearers of how to make inferences about what discourse task is being performed, what the speaker intends to communicate, whether the interlocutor has understood the message, etc.; hearers respond in accordance with the interpretive framework which they have acquired as a result of actual interactive experience. The analyses focus on differences in use and interpretation of contextualization devices in ethnically mixed settings, and are supposed to reveal possible sources of miscommunication and communicative breakdown, which often lead to (mostly negative) stereotypes and prejudices about members of other ethnic groups. In this approach, as, by the way, in the others, Western social conventions provide the model or unmarked case. In accordance with the Gumperz et al. quote above (page 23), judgments about other groups are thus made, among other things, in terms of the pace of a conversation, where, from a Western point of view, slow pace is negatively evaluated.

3.1.3.2 Rationality principles

The second approach to multifunctional analysis explains multifunctionality in terms of rationality principles. It focuses on processes of inference making (as Gumperz' line of thought), and on practical reasoning (as in the conversation analysts'). In contradistinction to the previous approach, the description of linguistic structures takes place here within a pre-defined theoretical framework of social and cognitive functioning. The starting point of this mostly philosophically inspired branch of research is the 'speech act', which conceptualizes the

following notions: speech consists of acts of speaking; meaning is to be partly described in terms of intentions; intentions underlying linguistic behavior are similar to intentions underlying other kinds of behavior; the purpose of an utterance is the bringing about of an effect in the hearer; acts of speaking have an overall purpose; and acts of speaking are embedded in an institutionalized, rule-governed, frame of behavior (Austin 1962; Searle 1969).

The approach described in this section combines the concept of speech act with the conversational principles developed by Grice (1975). Utterances are attributed a function through the combination of an utterance's linguistic form and the inferences made on the basis of conversational principles. The approach allows for defining the meaning of an utterance interactionally between discourse participants, an idea which was also favored by the group of researchers discussed in 3.1.3.1. Of importance for my research question is the assumption that the 'logic of conversation', as Grice calls his theory on conversational principles, is based on the premise that people want efficient communication of referential information (cf. Grice 1975: 45-46).

Grice insists that meaning should be conceived of as interaction, involving both speaker and hearer activities in establishing meaning. If an intention is not explicitly formulated, interlocutors rely on general *conversational principles* to assess intentions. The superordinate principle he proposes is the *principle of rationality*, which says that interlocutors make the general mutual assumption that their behavior is guided by rational decisions. According to Grice, the general principle governing conversation is the *cooperative principle*. Interactants assume of each other that they "make their conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which they are engaged" (Grice 1975: 45). In order to observe the cooperative principle, the interactants are assumed to adhere to particular maxims.[5] Speakers are expected to make their contributions in accordance with these maxims and hearers are expected to interpret the contributions accordingly. Inferences can be made about what is said (the conventional linguistic meaning of a sentence), and, if that fails, the hearer will compute a so-called 'conversational implicature' on the basis of the Gricean maxims. This process of inference making results in additional assumptions on the part of the participants, which Grice called "conversational implicatures."

The cooperative principle may furnish the basis on which inference making is carried out. However, it cannot explain why people (so often) breach the maxims. Other researchers have proposed additional conversational principles which are at work simultaneously with the cooperation principle.

Brown and Levinson (1978) claim that face preservation is a major factor guiding the use of language in social interaction, where all persons are supposed

to have 'face', that is, "roughly, the want to be unimpeded and the want to be approved of in certain respects" (ibid: 63). In their account it is assumed that any rational agent will seek to avoid face-threatening acts or minimize the threat by making use of particular strategies, of which *politeness* is one. Face-saving is one reason that can explain deviations from rational efficiency as postulated by Grice. Brown and Levinson's framework claims that the higher the level of politeness, the less efficient the information transfer.

Leech (1983: 79) postulates two sets of conversational principles (interpersonal and textual ones) "which are observed in the planning and interpretation of messages." In Leech's account, the cooperative and politeness principles belong to the set of interpersonal rhetorical principles together with what he calls the irony principle, and he suggests that it might be possible to find additional principles. Leech's set of textual principles includes a processibility principle, a clarity principle, an economy principle, and an expressivity principle, principles which guide stylistic choices and take into account cognitive constraints. As in Brown and Levinson's framework, the starting point for interpretation is (effective) information transfer. Leech distinguishes between the illocutionary goal and the social goal of an utterance. Together they constitute the pragmatic force of an utterance. Leech argues that all speech acts are indirect in the sense that they all trigger inferential processes in the hearer to come to an interpretation of the speaker's utterance. Some utterances ask for more inferential steps than others; they are so to speak more indirect than others. The least indirect interpretation, to use Leech's terms, is the default interpretation. In Leech's view, hearers can infer the meaning of an utterance, to some extent, from the grammatical construction, and for the rest they rely on conversational principles to determine the most appropriate meaning of a given utterance in a specific context. Since not all principles are compatible, the interpretation of a given utterance by the hearer can best be described in non-categorical terms, that is, as a construct on the basis of the 'hints' given by the speaker.

Common to Grice, Brown and Levinson, and Leech is their explanation of linguistic behavior as based on assumptions regarding the rationality of the participants and their needs and wants. Linguistic behavior is seen as a rational means to satisfy these needs and wants; this holds both with respect to the speaker's decisions and the hearer's interpretation of these. Conversational principles cover non-linguistic factors inasmuch as they characterize these interactive processes of speakers and hearers. It is also assumed in this framework that speakers' and hearers' decisions and interpretations are based on "the belief that men do what they find most rewarding to do" (Ryan 1978: 66); in other words, they are "utility-maximisers" (ibid.:72). To put it differently, participants in discourse apply a *cost-benefit analysis* to different interpersonal relation scales

and to factors regarding the quality of the text (Leech 1983). Kasher explicitly acknowledges the utilitarian considerations governing interaction when he proposes to replace Grice's cooperation principle by a *general rationality principle*,[6] which reads as follows: "Given a desired end ... make that linguistic action which most effectively and at least cost attains that purpose" (1985: 247).[7] According to Kasher, one aspect that accounts for the relative cost of a speech act is politeness, another one he explicitly mentions is time (Kasher 1986: 110). Kasher's point is that politeness, time, and possibly some other factors are not to be considered as conformity to, or deviation from, rational behavior, but *as factors with which rational behavior can be justified and reconstructed*. From this perspective, Leech's work offers the most complete list of factors which play a role in conversational decision-making processes. He emphasizes that inference making is based both on referential information, on textual and cognitive properties, and on the quality of the social relationship. The merit of adopting a rationality principle (i.e., a logic of practical reasoning) in order to account for discourse phenomena is that such a principle offers an explanatory framework for activities that otherwise may be misunderstood.

3.2 How to measure progress?

3.2.1 Progress: Talk as a goal-oriented activity

Progress, in this study, is conceived of in terms of a variety of goals. While people converse, they are simultaneously working on a variety of hierarchically ordered goals (where the higher level goals are reached through realizing lower level goals); furthermore, goals vary as to quality (e.g., referential information conveyance vs interpersonal rapport).[8] A conversation progresses when people come closer to their goals. The means appropriate for effectively pursuing one goal can be inadequate for effectively reaching another. Therefore, at any point in the discourse, participants have to make a choice as to which means, that is, which linguistic actions are most effective for pursuing the overall goal. This can result in (temporarily) favoring one particular goal over another. Progress relative to one type of goal, say informational progress, may be hampered at a particular point in the discourse, but at this point other goals may be pursued. Such a change of focus does not (necessarily) impede overall progress. It is with a view on the entire enterprise that speakers make rational decisions for producing and interpreting utterances. As to the interpretation of linguistic actions, I assume that speakers adhere to Kasher's general rationality principle which says that, given a desired end, speakers choose that linguistic action which most effectively and at least cost attains that purpose.

The distribution of propositional information is the starting point for describing progress in discourse in my research. That is, other goals are described relative to the process of information transfer. However, I believe that taking this perspective is just one way of looking at discourse. In what follows, I will try to show that a description of progress from this point of view is valuable for characterizing various discourse strategies, some of which are employed frequently, while others are encountered less often.

In Chapter 2, I have argued that members of the business world are much concerned about time, understood as relative to the pace of conversational progress; presumably, their concern is greater than that of conversationalists in other settings. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that business conversationalists attribute a higher value to time in their cost-benefit calculations than to other factors such as face, irony, or aesthetics, although concern for these matters is never completely eliminated.[9] Conversational principles, such as Fraser's "Principle of Efficiency" (1975: 195) and Leech's "Economy Principle" (1983: 67)[10] have been proposed to capture the general tendency for conversationalists to try to limit the use of linguistic means wherever possible, in as much as such a reduction implies a decrease in processing time (Giora 1988; Sperber & Wilson 1986). I assume that business people will give preference to such principles, emphasizing economy, over other kinds of principles. The practical problem for conversationalists in business talk is thus to strike a balance between limiting the linguistic material produced and maintaining intelligibility as well as satisfying minimal face concerns. As regards discourse sequences, conversationalists tend to minimize, wherever possible, the number of communicative acts, necessary to achieve an interactional goal.

3.2.2 Unit of analysis: The communicative act

The unit of analysis I propose is the communicative act,[11] that is, a human action, performed for the purpose of communicating, by uttering a word, phrase, or sentence, within an appropriate context. The formal criteria for identifying a communicative act are (1) intonation contour and/or (2) speaker change. Within a speaker's turn each communicative act corresponds to a tone unit whose end boundary is marked by a falling or rising contour; it is said to represent a unit of information, within which the stressed element represents the focus of information (cf. Kreckel 1981: 65; also Crystal 1975; Halliday 1978). The point of speaker change coincides with communicative act boundaries. In accordance with this criterion, even very short utterances (such as back channel signals) are considered communicative acts (cf. Clark & Schaefer 1989b: 281, who claim that, however short a contribution, it has to be cognitively assessed by the interlocutors, and, thus, requires processing effort).

I will bypass the question of what kinds or categories of communicative acts to distinguish. The labels and definitions of the communicative acts distinguished in my analyses are chosen for the purpose at hand; they do not imply any general theoretical claims. The only criteria these labels have to meet are relevance to, and suitability for a non-trivial analysis of the phenomenon under study. Possibly, utterances can be described in other terms as well. But the point here is not to give a complete description of the functions of individual utterances. Also, my main focus will not be on utterances that contribute directly to the goals of the negotiation, but rather on ancillary acts that serve agreement and grounding in the service of the main goals. My aim is to give comprehensive accounts of how such conversational tasks are carried out.

3.2.3 Way of analysis

The method used in the analyses is heuristic. It is based on the assumption that there is a rationale behind each piece of linguistic behavior, and that we can discover this rationale if we try hard enough, and not give up. My description of language use is oriented towards the discovery of recurrent patterns in conversations, more specifically, towards discovering patterns in sequences of communicative acts. The fact that there are a variety of solutions for an interactional problem is explained by our assumption that the decisions on the part of the conversationalists in carrying out their communicative task are based on rationality. Such an assumption is preferable to one that considers decisions as 'deviations' or as 'abnormal' or, in the case of foreign language speakers, as 'incorrect' interactional behavior.

For the purpose of describing the phenomena in Chapters 4 through 6, viz., topic change, completion, and the expression of disagreement, I have isolated the discourse sequences under study from the surrounding conversation. That is, I concentrate on the achievement of a limited, micro-level interactional goal, and not on the overall organization of an entire conversation.

Each instance of a phenomenon is systematically studied. This involves (1) distinguishing the individual communicative acts in the sequence; (2) attributing (a) function(s) to these acts; and (3) describing the various forms in which the sequences occur. The descriptions after these three steps sometimes reveal features which are specific to the discourse genre under study, i.e., business talk, insofar as they do not correspond to the patterns of other kinds of discourse genres described in the literature.

As already stated in Chapter 1, a comparison is made between two kinds of conversations: those involving native speakers only, and those involving both native and non-native speakers. Differences in structure between these two

conversational settings are explained in terms of conversational cost and benefit factors, along the lines discussed above.

Although the analyses include quantitative descriptions of the data, the overall design of the study is qualitative, since what I am concerned with is the interpretation of utterances and sequences. Such an interpretation is necessary if, in addition to pointing out that there are differences, we want to explain why they occur (see Bremer et al. (1988) for a support of this view). In addition quantitative analyses of the frequencies with which particular options occur are used to reveal speakers' preferences for certain patterns.

Let me stress that the analyses of this study are based on plausibility, rather than on uncontroversial taxonomies. Within the given context, the interpretations of the communicative acts that are provided here are meaningful, but we can never say for sure what a speaker means by an utterance. The final conclusions are a result of distilling the clear cases from the unclear ones, and from reanalyzing the reorganized set of data.

3.3 Foreign language use and discourse analysis

The present section reviews the literature on foreign language use, especially as to the discourse characteristics typical for interlanguage settings. As we will see in the following sections, the discourse techniques associated with these characteristics may tend to make messages longer. I will depart from these characteristics in order to predict what sort of behavior can be expected in the analyses in Chapters 4 through 6.

So far, there has been very little discourse-analytical research on foreign language use. (See for an overview, Van Els et al. 1984: 94-102.) This may be due to the fact that discourse analysis, as it is usually practiced, has concentrated on 'regular', i.e., native conversations, in contrast to what is perceived as strongly deviating and characteristically different conversational style of conversations in which non-native speakers participate. Most conspicuous among these characteristics is the simplified register used by native speakers when addressing non-native speakers (a phenomenon generally known as 'foreigner talk' (Bremer et al. 1988, Clyne 1981, Ferguson 1971, and Roche 1986). Foreigner talk is characterized by three types of processes, i.e., reduction, simplification, and clarification, resulting in shorter and simpler sentences, a slower pace of talking, a relatively frequent use of questions, paraphrases, periphrastic devices and metacommunicative comments, and the generalized use of formal terms of address. Research on the communicative behavior of the (non-native, non-fluent) foreign language speaker reveals a reduced amount of non-verbal behavior (Valokorpi

1980). Thomas (1984) found that non-native speakers do not use fewer lexicalized Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (e.g., "I warn you that ...," "I ask you if..."), but do use them differently than native speakers; this may result in native speakers' misinterpreting a message's connotation. This is in line with Gumperz' finding (1982a), according to which misunderstandings and misinterpretations among native and non-native speakers are to be attributed to a different use of contextualization devices (see Section 3.1.3.1 above). Experimental research shows that native and non-native speakers of a language, while using the same verbalizations of speech acts, differ in the frequencies with which they use particular verbalizations (Trosborg 1987). 'Interlanguage' research, that is, research on linguistic strategies which are typical for intermediate levels of linguistic proficiency in non-native speakers (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1983), reveals that strategies such as topic avoidance and message abandonment, several forms of paraphrase, borrowing, appeal for assistance, and mime are used more often by non-native than by native speakers (Tarone & Yule 1987: 51-52). Experimenting with task dialogues between two non-native speakers, Tarone and Yule (1987) were able to identify three additional interlanguage strategies: literal repetitions of words, "explication" (i.e., spelling out of an expression used earlier by the same speaker), and "over-explicitness" (i.e., a greater use of detail than common in native speakers). The latter two strategies are considered by Tarone and Yule as redundancy features. Note that some of the interlanguage strategies are the same as those found in foreigner talk.

The present approach differs in two respects from the above mentioned studies. First, results obtained so far on foreign language use and discourse analysis mainly concern grammatical structures on the sentence level, grammatical realizations of speech acts, and the frequency of use of speech acts. My concern, by contrast, is with investigating discourse sequences; i.e., sequences of acts performed to carry out a particular conversational task. Second, I will focus on (adaptive) behavior by both native and non-native speakers, which they use to overcome difficulties arising from the interlanguage setting. This contrasts with foreigner talk research, which focuses on adaptive behavior of native speakers towards non-native adults, and with cross-cultural communication and interlanguage research, where the focus is on differences in performance between the two parties involved.

Of the above-mentioned characteristics of interlanguage discourse, those subsumed under clarification and redundancy make messages longer, and are thus, strictly speaking, less efficient solutions to progress the conversation. Devices such as paraphrase, meta-communicative comment, repetition, explication, and over-explicitness can manifest themselves as communicative acts. I expect that mixed conversation data will probably exhibit a greater use of these

devices, and result in longer sequences of acts as compared to similar contexts in native conversations.

Furthermore, certain ways of simplifying the discourse may also result in longer sequences. For instance, participants may opt for a presentation in which referential and discoursal relations are made simpler and more specific than would be expected in a native setting. Simplicity (in terms of acts) can consist in presenting each 'chunk' of information in a separate communicative act (with less embedding), but also in pursuing a single goal by means of a single act (e.g., by opting for clause external, rather than for clause internal modification). Alternatively, a message can be made more specific by using meta-communicative expressions and explanations.

In the literature reviewed above (Sections 3.1.1 and following), we find several suggestions as to how to explain the occurrence of such longer sequences. Redundancy can be ascribed to an increase of 'noise' in the communication process (see Section 3.1.1.1). Since people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds share less knowledge in and about interaction and language(s), an increase of noise is likely to occur in interlanguage settings. On the general level, there are the differences in social knowledge and background information. On the specific linguistic level, we find differences in knowledge of grammar and lexicon, as well as in knowledge about how contextual presuppositions relate to the use of contextualization conventions. Empirical studies (Gumperz 1982b), including reports by experienced negotiators (Fisher & Ury 1981: 34) show that differences in the use and interpretation of linguistic devices can lead to misunderstandings and communicative breakdowns.

A further assumption is that participants in international business settings are not only aware of the problems due to the interlanguage setting by and in itself, but also of the importance of carrying through the conversation nevertheless. Consequently, participants are expected to devise and use strategies to prevent and obviate disturbances in the communication process. Thus, linguistic behavior resulting in longer sequences of acts can also be attributed to an explicit need to 'ground' the information (see Section 3.1.1.2).

3.4 Concluding remarks

The present chapter has offered an overview of functionally oriented research on connected discourse from the perspective of progress in discourse, and how it manifests itself. Progress in discourse thus is taken to be the main goal of conversationalists; it is identified with progress in information transfer, whereas other discourse goals are described relative to this main goal. From this point of

view, certain kinds of behavior can be said to protract progress, while other behaviors can be said to advance progress. From other points of view, behavior can be described relative to other goals (such as textual coherence, easing cognitive processing, and interpersonal relationships). In general, conversationalists are assumed to orient themselves towards efficient communication by reducing the amount of linguistic material wherever possible; this holds especially for business people, who are assumed to favor efficiency over other kinds of interactional goals. This assumption forms the basis for interpreting what are seen as 'deviations' from the shortest linguistic solution to a particular discourse problem, where the solution chosen is the most efficient one with an eye on the overall discourse goal(s). The conversational principles, as we have outlined them above, offer an interpretive framework in which to account for such deviations.

4 ESTABLISHING TOPIC CHANGE

Like other conversations, business conversations, too, are organized around discourse topics, only in a more explicit way. The partners have often exchanged agendas prior to their meeting, outlining the ground they wish to cover. The interlocutors' goal is to reach agreement on a number of specified topics; these topics are the raisons d'être of their meetings. To the extent that business conversations are planned, pre-structured, and focused, they resemble other kinds of task-oriented conversations (cf., Grosz 1978, Ten Have 1981): the range of possible topics is limited, in contrast to casual conversations (as described by the conversational analysts, e.g., Jefferson 1984b, Schegloff & Sacks 1974), and it is less necessary to establish the relevance of a new topic, as this analysis also will show.

Business conversations can be said to proceed well when the talk brings the interlocutors closer to a settlement, no matter what this settlement may be: it can be the conclusion of a deal, or a decision to postpone the matter, or an agreement to break off the negotiation. Thus, the interlocutors share a superordinate common goal, and, as outlined in the previous chapter, progress in discourse has to do with achieving this goal.

The present chapter deals with the moments in a conversation where interlocutors stop talking about one discourse topic and proceed to the following. Such transitions from one topic to another are usually called 'topic changes.' In the literature, topic changes are assumed to occur in particular environments in the conversation, and to take place in characterizable and recognizable ways. For instance, Maynard (1980) argues that topic changes are used as a means to focus away from upcoming disagreements and to restore continuous talk or introduce a speaker change after a series of silences. Chafe (1979: 162) attributes silences and other forms of significant hesitations to important and time-consuming mental processing, such as often performed at paragraph boundaries in spoken narratives. Like Maynard, Hinds (1976), in his study of Japanese discourse, maintains that topic changes are initiated in order to avoid disagreements, or when a topic is exhausted; according to Hinds, such changes are typically preceded by a series of repetitions.

In this chapter, I am not concerned with the question of when (or why) topic changes occur; rather, my aim is to find out to what extent topic changes in business talk are marked, what kind of communicative acts are used to establish a topic change, and whether there are any differences between mixed and native conversations as regards the length of the individual topic changes and their character (on the notion of 'length of a topic change', see below).

As pointed out above, empirical studies have shown that specific interactional work is put into topic changes (see also Brown 1977; Bublitz 1988; Coulthard 1977; Schiffrin 1987; Scholtens & Stalpers 1982). Features indicating topic boundaries have been called bracketing devices (Goffman 1974). Such bracketing devices are supposed to facilitate the hearer's inferencing about the meaning of the discourse topic; also, they serve to establish a frame for an episode of talk (Brown & Yule 1983: 133; Goffman 1974: 255). Bracketing devices can be more or less explicit in nature, varying from intonation contours and discourse markers to the use of meta-linguistic expressions. Often, bracketing of topics is managed through talk exchanges which can be separated from talk *about* a topic. Such exchanges have been called "boundary exchanges" (Coulthard 1977: 103), "boundary markers" (Brown & Yule 1983: 101), "topical actions" (Bublitz 1988: 5), "cue phrases" (Grosz & Sidner 1986: 185), and "transitionary sentences" (Hinds 1976: 14). Whenever such extra exchanges occur in connection with topic change, the flow of informational talk is interrupted or stalled, because the participants leave the content level of the discourse.

Bracketing devices can be associated with the end or the beginning of a unit of talk (Schiffrin 1987: 37), although sometimes it is hard to say whether a particular device marks a closing or an opening. For the purpose of the present discussion, topic changes are uniformly analyzed as consisting of a topic closing and a topic opening part. A topic change is identified by its topic opening part; as I will show below, devices for closing down a previous topic can only be identified retrospectively. The length of a topic change is measured by the number of boundary devices involved in establishing a topic opening and the number of closing devices activated before the next topic opening.

Before presenting the analyses, we must say something about the notion of 'discourse topic', as used here. This notion is hard to define, as has been pointed out repeatedly in the literature (e.g., Brown & Yule 1983: Chapter 3; Schegloff & Sacks 1974: 235; Schiffrin 1987: 26), yet, it is important to make it as explicit as possible, as the identification of topic changes depends on it. The following section will present a (tentative) definition.

4.1 'Discourse topic' and 'topic change'

'Discourse topic' is often conceived of in a pre-theoretical manner as that "what is being talked about" (Hymes 1974: 55; also Clark & Schaefer 1989a: 124, and Hinds 1976: 13). As Bublitz (1988) points out, such a characterization does not suffice to operationalize the concept when we want to identify units of speech as belonging to one and the same discourse topic in empirical data. A concept is

needed which reflects our intuitions about certain sequences of utterances while offering criteria identifiable in the text. Below, I will present a working definition which permits me to independently characterize parts of talk as topical units. Even though lacking theoretical pretensions, my definition may be helpful in characterizing certain aspects of foreign language use, especially in business talk, and for revealing some of the latter's organizing principles.

Experiments with written and spoken texts have shown that 'what the discourse is about' can be paraphrased as titles covering individual segments of text (Bransford & Johnson 1973). Van Dijk (1977: 137) proposes the notion of 'macro-structure' to characterize discourse topics where "a macro-structure of a sequence of sentences is a *semantic representation* of some kind, viz. a proposition entailed by the sequence of propositions underlying the discourse (or part of it)." Keenan and Schieffelin (1976) also characterize the topic of a discourse as a proposition. An important part of their definition is that some claim is made, or elicited, about this proposition. A similar view is expressed in Scholtens and Stalpers (1982), where topics and subtopics in discussions are characterized within an argumentation framework. Each (sub)topic consists of a statement (with its inherent conditions) which is challenged or questioned by interlocutors. Grosz and Sidner (1986) associate discourse topics with discourse purpose, that is, the intention that underlies the participants' involvement in the particular (part of) discourse. As Brown and Yule (1983: Chapter 3) have convincingly argued, all such definitions are problematic because, for any text, or part of text, it is possible to formulate more than one correct title, proposition, or purpose. For these authors the definition of topic is a theoretical, not an empirical problem, since they view the variety of topic allocations as a natural feature of discourse: sometimes the conversationalists themselves are not sure exactly what the talk is about, or they may have varying representations of 'what is being talked about'. The problem is thus that in empirical data, a number of different ways of representing a discourse topic are available, depending on one's point of view.

With this conclusion: that structural divisions based on discourse topics depend on the view one takes, I fully agree. In order to safeguard the consistency of one's views, it is crucial that these views be made explicit. Regarding business negotiations, I am in a position to ground my interpretive framework in the rich literature on negotiation theory. Here, we find definitions of negotiations and descriptions of the kind of interaction participants are involved in (see Chapter 2). One typical way of characterizing negotiation is to consider it a problem solving activity (e.g., Dieckmann & Paul 1983; Pruitt 1983, Zartman 1978), where 'problem solving' is broadly defined as the process involved in the determination of the effective sequence of alternatives leading to a desired goal (Wolman 1973: 290). In the same vein, I will assume business talk to consist of a succession of

problem-solution sequences in a broad sense. One such sequence is considered identical with a discourse topic. A problem is defined as a difference of position between interlocutors, who differ in their understanding or evaluation of a certain issue; along with this difference, the interlocutors have the belief that they will be able to reach a shared position. The original difference in position may be due to deficient knowledge on the part of one or the other of the interlocutors (who then may make a request for supplementary information), or to differences in opinion about a certain state of affairs; alternatively, the different positions may concern some proposal that one party wants the other to accept.

Discourse topics can be paraphrased as questions or statements. Examples from the data are: "What shall we talk about today?," "What kind of company do you have?," "I shall tell you something about our publicity campaign," "Let me explain to you the latest developments," or "We cannot accept your latest proposal." Differences are always about some specific issue; this issue can be identified in the text, usually as an NP or a VP. For instance, in examples (4), (5), and (6) discussed below, issues can be pinpointed, respectively, as French *nouveaux développements en BOUHUYS* (new developments in BOUHUYS, a company), Dutch *wij zullen slopen* (we will tear down), French *CLIENT-ROI* (the name of another company).

A statement about some issue becomes a topic only if the interlocutors perceive it as a problem, that is, when one speaker presents his view on an issue and another speaker acknowledges the divergence in position. In principle, all statements can be called into question: in reality, this happens only in a few cases, viz., whenever the participants think it is worth the effort. In this sense, topics are 'interactionally defined.'

A discourse topic in business talk can thus be seen as a problem-solving sequence consisting of the communicative acts needed to formulate the problem, the acts which help to carry out the search for a solution, and the acts needed to implement the solution. Utterances are said to belong to a given discourse topic whenever they can be shown to contribute to one of the three mentioned activities with regard to a specified problem. Thus, any topic that the participants perceive as requiring a solution (either one by agreement or a practical one) constitutes a discourse topic. A new discourse topic is opened up whenever the participants start talking about a newly identified problem and about possibilities for its solution.

The above definition of discourse topic in terms of problems and solutions is an analytical construct; however, it corresponds to what business people (in the data) usually refer to when stating what they talk about and why. Often, the term 'problem' is used to refer to a discourse topic; for instance, in examples (1) and (2) below, the expressions in italics illustrate this case.

(1) DD-2:B144
A and N are selling a piece of land

N: maar u neemt niet die architekt dus die vraag zit in jouw prijs zit daar die die die die architekt van ons eh die we dan toch
(0.9)
A: nee mijnheer Ysselstein zegt dat is het *probleem* van de verkopers (...)
N: daarom vraag ik het toch
A: nee eh ja
N: *ik praat alleen maar over problemen*
((LAUGHS))
dingen die we al opgelost hebben zwijgen we over
((LAUGHTER))

N: but you don't take that architect so that question does your price does it include that that that that architect of ours eh whom we after all
(0.9)
A: no Mr. Ysselstein says that's the sellers' *problem* (...)
N: that's precisely why I'm asking
A: no eh yes
N: *I only talk about problems*
((LAUGHS))
things we have dealt with we don't talk about
((LAUGHTER))

In example (2), a topic is explicitly introduced as a problem.

(2) FF-T12:154

L: mais par contre on va certainement avoir un petit *problème* notamment par rapport à AP.

L: but on the other hand we're certainly going to have a small *problem* especially with regard to AP.

My definition allows, moreover, to differentiate between 'topic talk' and 'small talk' within the business setting, that is, talk oriented toward the discussion of a problem vs talk about activities accessory to the meeting, such as 'offering a drink' or 'requesting to turn on the light'.

The analysis that follows deals with topic changes in the sense defined earlier, i.e., points at which interlocutors stop dealing with one problem in order to start talking about another.[1] Altogether, there are 108 topic changes in the data. My characterization of discourse topic as interactionally defined implies that the introduction of a problem must be ratified by another participant. In all but two instances of topic change, we find verbally expressed ratifications. (In the two exceptions, to be discussed below, the ratification is noticeably absent.) This implies that, in principle, topic changes consist of at least two communicative acts, performed by two different speakers: the first act mentions a state of affairs, the second expresses the second speaker's willingness to talk about this state of affairs. This latter act I will call the 'uptake'. There are mainly two ways in which uptake occurs. One is for the first speaker to present the state of affairs as a problem, with the second speaker agreeing to talk about the problem. The other occurs when the first speaker presents a state of affairs, and the second speaker

indicates that there is a problem with regard to the state of affairs, as presented. The examples given below show instances of both cases.

Usually, however, a topic change requires more than two communicative acts. The analysis in Section 4.2 will show that topic openings are most often preceded by closing activities. And often a topic introduction requires more interactional work in order for a reaction to the presuppositions underlying a particular state of affairs to occur. A given state of affairs cannot always be captured in a single communicative act; neither are presuppositions immediately recognized as such by the other speaker. Example (3) shows a case were the topic opening takes two acts only. Example (4), on the other hand, shows an elaborate topic introduction comprising 30 communicative devices that have to be activated before the problem is recognized by the other speaker.

(3) DD-1:D42
Mr. Ysselstein (Y) tries to buy a plot of land from Mr. Van Nunen (N) and his colleague. Y justifies his trustworthiness as a project developer by explaining the kind of projects he is, and has been, involved in (lines 1 - 4). N, then, wants to know how the company is organized (line 5), upon which the topic is changed to talking about the status of the company.

1 Y:	en honderd-tweeëntwintig staan er nog onder de kap.	Y: and one hundred and twentytwo are still under construction.
2	en de andere honderd heb ik ook verkocht.	and I have also sold the other one hundred.
3	(1.1)	(1.1)
4	en daar starten we, daar zijn we al lang januari mee klaar.	and we will start, we'll have finished them already by January.
5 N:	dat zit eh allemaal in een geïntegreerde onderneming het [ontwikkelen het bouwen?	N: is that eh all in one integrated company [development and construction?
6 Y:	[ja ja dat is allemaal geïntegreerd in in YSSELSTEIN BOUWBEDRIJVEN.	Y: [yes yes that is all integrated in into YSSELSTEIN CONSTRUCTION WORKS.
7	daar zit heel de	all of it is there
8 N:	hoe heet dat?	N: how is it called?

(4) FD-1:B35-B54
F and N have been discussing the items which N has advised F to purchase. Line 1 is the last item of the list. In line 5 N starts to introduce a new topic using a cataphoric pronoun. The issue is introduced in line 7: *nouveaux développements en BOUHUYS*, but N actually starts talking about the developments only in line 26, after having given an elaborate explanation of why he thinks it is necessary to talk about the developments. F tries to reject the topic in line 27, upon which N restates what he wants to talk about. F then recognizes the need to go into this topic (line 30).

1 N:	et une [!] système d'enregistrement heu (0.6) à votre choix.	N: and a recording system eh (0.6) according to your choice.

2	(0.8)	(0.8)
3	d'accord.	O.K.
4	(1.6)	(1.6)
5	peut-être ce à ce moment.	maybe this at the moment.
6	parce que heu c'est aussi la raison de de de mon [!] visite aujourd'hui.	because eh that's also the reason for for for my visit today.
7	je veux expliquer un peu des nouveaux (0.6) développements en BOUHUYS.	I would like to explain a little bit about the new (0.6) developments in BOUHUYS.
8	(1.0)	(1.0)
9	parce que alors je suis là pour heu pour vous aider hein?	because well I'm here to eh to help you right?
10 F:	mm.	F: mm.
11 N:	pour heu notre vente /ha/ ne stoppe [!] pas avec la la vente directe.	N: so eh our sale /ha/ doesn't stop with the the direct sale.
12 F:	vente c'est ça oui.	F: sale that's right yeah.
13 N:	mais l'après-vente et la coopération pour développer la heu la séparation comme à BRILLY.	N: but the after-sale and the cooperation to develop the eh the separation like in BRILLY.
14	c'est c'est important.	that's that's important.
15 F:	mm.	F: mm.
16 N:	dans /elle/ très important je pense dans dans ce cas.	N: in /elle/ very important I think in in this case.
17	(0.6)	(0.6)
18 F:	m.	F: m.
19 N:	di pas directement seulement SAINTE MARIE mais, dans tous les hôpitaux comme le [!] CLINIQUE en [!] Bruxelles.	N: di not only directly for SAINTE MARIE but, in all the hospitals such as CLINIQUE in Brussels.
20 F:	mm.	F: mm.
21 N:	et tout ça.	N: and all that.
22	(0.6)	(0.6)
23	nous avons heu, je pense (0.6) pour vous mettre au courant.	we have eh, I think (0.6) in order to keep you informed.
24	vous connaissez la l'équipement BOUHUYS maintenant.	you know the BOUHUYS equipment now.
25 F:	mm.,	F: mm.,
26 N:	heu [nous nous avons renouvelé le la pompe.	N: eh [we we have rebuilt the the pump.
27 F:	[(c'est ce que j'ai) testé hein?	F: [(that's what I've) tested right?
28 N:	vous avez déjà testé l'équipement.	N: you have already tested the equipment.
29	mais nous avons renouvelé la pompe la pompe.	but we have rebuilt the pump the pump.
30 F:	c'est tout c'est une ancienne pompe en effet que	F: that's all that's indeed an old pump really that

Instances such as (4) support the claim encountered in the literature on topic changes (see page 36 above) according to which it is possible to distinguish between the exchanges that mark topic boundaries, and which serve to identify a particular state of affairs, and actual (substance-oriented) topic talk. The sequence of communicative acts needed to establish the correct discourse topic referent I will call a topic opening sequence; it consists of speaker's presentation of a state of affairs, together with interlocutor's uptake. The uptake is considered to mark the end of the topic opening sequence.

As I already indicated above, two of the topic openings have no overt verbal uptake. Uptakes are necessary components of topic openings; therefore, their absence is noticeable, and some explanation called for. In one occurrence, a new topic is forced upon the interlocutor; this is the only case of interactional conflict occurring in my data (it is treated in detail in Section 4.5, example (14)). The other absence occurs in the context of a very long pause (of 1.7 seconds) following the presentation of the problem. This is one of the few long pauses in the native French setting (see Section 2.4 above).

A topic closing consists of what happens before the next topic's opening. Thus, a topic closing sequence is identified retrospectively. The following activities have been identified at this place in the discourse as closing devices: making an appointment, acknowledgments, summaries, pauses, repetitions, small talk, laughter, along with meta-linguistic closing expressions (cf. Hinds 1976; Jefferson 1984b; Maynard 1980; Schegloff & Sacks 1974; Scholtens & Stalpers 1982). A feature common to all of these activities is that participants do not engage in any perceptible action on the content level. This does not mean that they do nothing at all, but their actions do not add new information to the current discourse topic, nor do they lead to other discourse topics. Schegloff and Sacks have analyzed a subset of such 'informationless' utterances as "possible pre-closings" of conversations, where the speaker indicates "that he has not now anything more or new to say, and also [gives] a 'free' turn to a next who, in that such an utterance can be treated as having broken with any prior topic, can without violating topical coherence take the occasion to introduce a new topic ... *After* such a possible pre-closing is specifically a place for new topic beginnings" (Schegloff & Sacks 1974: 246). In this view, such so-called 'topic-less passing turns' foreshadow a topic change or the closing of the entire conversation. In my analysis, interactional work signalling interlocutors' readiness to close down the current topic, and consequently, to open a new one, consists of communicative acts which do not contribute any new information to the current discourse topic. As will become obvious below, not all topic openings are preceded by such behavior; nor is it necessarily the case that such 'closing behavior' indicates a willingness to close down the topic (see Section 4.5 on topic conflicts).

4.2 Analysis of topic changes

Of the 108 topic changes identified in the data, 38 occur in native Dutch conversations, 29 in native French conversations, and 41 in the mixed ones. Topic changes will be described by the types and number of communicative acts and pauses occurring in the closing and opening parts. Pause is frequently observed to co-occur with topic changes, (either as a byproduct of topic change (Chafe 1979) or as indicating the appropriate place for such a change (Maynard 1980)). Strictly speaking, a pause is not a communicative act as defined in the previous chapter (page 29); even so, some authors hold the view that "non-talk can serve in interaction as the formal exponent of acts and even as a means of transacting events" (Enninger 1987: 271). Despite their lack of linguistic marking, pauses can be the preferred second part of an adjacency pair or the socially marked and dispreferred second-pair-part (Enninger 1987: 290; see also Levinson (1983: 338-339) for similar interpretations). Whatever one's view of pauses, it remains a fact that they, to a large extent, determine the pace of the discourse flow, both in terms of real time, and (possibly) of perceived progress (see Section 2.4 above); hence it would be strange to disregard a phenomenon which is so conspicuously present in the literature on topic change as well as in the topic changes in my data. Therefore, I have included in the description of topic boundary markers pauses of more than 0.5 seconds occurring at the boundary of a tone unit. In determining the length of topic changes, I will treat pauses on a par with communicative acts. Together, communicative acts and pauses are referred to as 'boundary devices.'

Since topic closings are identified retrospectively (cf. above), I will describe topic changes by first looking at topic opening sequences (4.2.1), then at topic closings (4.2.2), and finally at the length of topic changes (4.2.3).

4.2.1 Topic opening sequences

Most topic opening sequences contain more than the two minimally required acts ('presentation of the problem' and 'uptake'). I have grouped those 'extra' devices into eight categories. First of all, extra acts occur when the presentation of the problem is elaborated over several acts. This is the case when the first speaker feels the need to supply background information, justifications, etc., or when he or she presents the problem gradually, in installments, as it were. In the latter case, one usually observes extra acknowledgment acts by the second speaker. Example (5) shows a mixture of both: Y presents the problem in installments (lines 7, 9, 14) and in between furnishes background information (lines 4

and 11). The example also shows that A repeatedly acknowledges Y's contributions (lines 3, 5, 8, 10, 13).

(5) DD-2:B233

1	Y: ja nu hebben wij het volgende.	Y: yes now we have the following.
2	en dat is een punt dat wel meespeelt.	and that is a point which does play a role.
3	A: ja.	A: yes.
4	Y: wanneer wij nu (0.7) of, tot een overeenstemming komen of sorry op mijn voorstel.	Y: when we now (0.7) or, come to a conclusion or sorry on my proposal.
5	A: ja.	A: yes.
6	Y: is het volgende.	Y: is the following.
7	en dat is een, verplichting die ik aanga ten aanzien van de gemeente.	and that is an, obligation to which I commit myself regarding the municipality.
8	A: ja.	A: yes.
9	Y: dat ik (0.5) op zeer korte termijn?	Y: that I will (0.5) on very short notice?
10	A: mm.	A: mm.
11	Y: eigenlijk binnen veertien dagen staat er in mijn brief geloof ik.	Y: as a matter of fact within two weeks is written in my letter I believe.
12	((LAUGHTER))	((LAUGHTER))
13	A: ja ja.	A: yes yes.
14	Y: wij zullen slopen.	Y: we will tear down.

Secondly, additional acts occur when the first speaker first presents the issue he or she wants to talk about in a separate act and then mentions a particular problem concerning the issue (or the other way round). This is shown in example (6), where L states that she wants to ask something about "CLIENT-ROI" (line 1), which is acknowledged by her interlocutor (line 2). Then she states her problem, namely that she has not had any news about "CLIENT-ROI" (line 3).[2]

(6) FF-T12:B6

1	L: oui je voulais vous poser une question heu justement à propos de CLIENT-ROI.	L: yes I wanted to ask you a question eh exactly about CLIENT-ROI.
2	G: oui.	G: yes.
3	L: on n'a toujours pas de nouvelles concernant le	L: we still haven't had any news about the
4	G: ah bon CLIENT-ROI. ah ben écoutez moi je suis passé l'autre jour.	G: oh yeah CLIENT-ROI. eh well listen I went by the other day.

The third type of extra acts are those that explicitly announce the ongoing verbal activity by so-called meta-linguistic expressions, such as French *autre et dernière*

question (one more, final question), or, as in example (5) above, Dutch *nu hebben wij het volgende* (now we have the following).

The remaining categories of topic opening devices are interlocutor's acknowledgments, repetition of information already presented in the topic opening sequence, excuses and minimizing remarks (which I subsume under the term of 'softeners'), and pauses. Finally, I have lumped together in a residual category acts with a very low frequency of occurrence (two or less), including acts which typically function as discourse topic starters, i.e., pre-announcements (of the kind described by Terasaki 1976), such as French *vous savez pas la dernière qu'il m'a faite* (you wouldn't believe the last trick he pulled on me), attention getters, such as French *venez Monsieur* (come on Sir), false starts, (a succession of) discourse markers, and acts which explicitly elicit a reaction from the other speaker.

One of the categories, viz. meta-linguistic expressions, is special in that instances of this group can occur in combination with any of the other categories in one act. In such combinations, the act is not categorized as a meta-linguistic expression, but according to whatever other function it has; thus, we avoid counting the act twice when determining the length of the topic opening sequence.

The length of topic opening sequences in the data varies from one to 18 devices, but sequences consisting of two to five devices are by far the most common (89 out of the 108).

All topic opening sequences taken together account for a total of 434 devices. The frequency of occurrence of each of the ten categories is represented in Table 4.1.

Leaving out the two acts which define a topic opening (problem presentation and uptake), we find that extra length of topic opening sequences is mainly due to three types of devices: elaborated presentation of the problem (61 occurrences), pauses (51 occurrences), and meta-linguistic expressions (37 occurrences). The other devices are far lower in frequency: separate presentation of issues (19), interlocutor's acknowledgment (12), repetition (8), softeners (10), and others (22).

Of the eight categories of additional devices distinguished, two represent acts which add new information on the content level: separate presentation of an issue and elaborated presentation of a problem. The other devices (meta-linguistic expressions, interlocutor's acknowledgment, repetition, softeners, pauses, and others) do not contribute any new information.

Table 4.1: Types of devices occurring in topic opening sequences.

Definitional acts	*Number of occurrences*
Presentation of the problem	108
Interlocutor's uptake	106
Optional additional devices in topic opening sequences:	
Elaborated presentation of problem	61
Separate presentation of issue	19
Metalinguistic expression	37
Interlocutor's acknowledgment	12
Repetition	8
Softener	10
Pause	51
Others	22
Total	434

This means that, of the 434 devices identified in all of the topic opening sequences, 188 concern the presentation of the discourse topic proper (acts concerning presentation of the problem, elaborated presentation of problem, and separate presentation of issue), 106 the uptake by the interlocutor, and the remaining 140 are additional, topic-less devices. Stated differently, one third of the devices (32.3%) in topic opening sequences is covered by topic-less devices, whereas 43.3% of the acts concern the presentation of the problem (i.e., an average of two acts per opening sequence).

4.2.2 Topic closing sequences

In my analysis of topic closings, I use the feature of lack of new information, or topic-lessness, for the purpose of identifying topic closing devices. As such, I have counted the topic-less devices occurring after the last topical utterance of the current discourse topic, and immediately preceding a topic opening.

The devices meeting this criterion and occurring in this position correspond to closing devices as described in the literature (see page 42 above). However, I eliminated the category 'repetition', because, depending on the context, repetitions fall under the categories of acknowledgment (when interlocutor's contribution is repeated) or summary. This makes for a list of eight categories of topic closing devices: (1) small talk, (2) summary, including 'coda' and 'evaluation', as defined by Labov and Waletsky (1966) for narratives, (3) making an arrangement or a promise for future action, (4) acknowledgment, (5) pauses of 0.5 seconds or more at a tone unit boundary, (6) joking remarks and laughter, (7) meta-linguistic expressions, and (8) (a succession of) discourse marker(s) or false starts.

As in topic opening sequences, meta-linguistic expressions are only counted as separate acts if they are not combined with any of the other functions. Further, it should be noted that small talk often consumes several acts. Most of the instances of small talk in the data are short, consisting of one to four acts only, but there is one instance which takes 21 acts.[3] Despite their brevity, small talk speech events seem to be of greater importance with regard to topic changes than length of sequence, measured in absolute terms. Still, because my definition of topic change is based on the notion of length of sequence, I had to count every act individually.

Let me illustrate what topic closings look like, using some examples. In (7), four topic closing devices occur (lines 2 through 5): N's acknowledgment, a pause of 1.0 seconds, another acknowledgment by N, and another long pause (0.9 seconds).

(7) FD-2:B8
G has explained the situation of the company: who owns the land and who owns the cellars. Line 1 is his last remark with respect to this topic. In line 6 N opens a new topic, of which the issue is *problème avec la vente des vins*, with which he elicits marketing information of the company. This remark is taken up by G (line 8). After an acknowledgment of N (line 9), G continues to give information about the market position of the company.

1	G: et tout le reste on essaye de se le partager dans la, dans les alentours quoi.	G: and for the rest we try to share it among us in the, in the vicinity right.
2	N: ouais ouais.	N: yeah yeah.
3	(1.0)	(1.0)
4	c'est drôle ça oui.	that's funny yes.
5	(0.9)	(0.9)
6	et vous n'a vous n'avez pas de problème avec la vente de des vins?	and you ha you have no problems selling the the wine?
7	(0.7)	(0.7)
8	G: non.	G: no.
9	N: non?	N: no?
10	G: c'est de mieux en mieux.	G: it's getting better and better.

Example (8) shows five topic closing devices used between the last utterances belonging to the previous topic (F's question to check whether he understood the price correctly and A's answer (lines 6 and 7, respectively)) and the start of the new discourse topic (line 13): F acknowledges A's information, a pause of 1.3 seconds, another acknowledgment by F, a pause of 1.2 seconds, and F's summary *nou ja ik weet genoeg*.

(8) DD-T10:II:23
F buys hydraulic truck parts from A and installs them on his client's trucks. F wants to order a new truck part, about which he is collecting technical and financial

information (current discourse topic). In line 13, F starts talking about a new problem, namely about one of his clients who is now buying something directly from A, instead of ordering it through F.

1	F:	wat kost die kieper negenhonderd?	F: how much is that dump truck nine-hundred?
2	A:	nou die die zitten wel op de drieënveertig vierenveertig.	A: well that they do go for about forty-three forty-four.
3		(1.6)	(1.6)
4	F:	ja.	F: yeah.
5		(2.0)	(2.0)
6		ja hè vierenveertigduizend [hè?	yeah right forty-four thousand [right?
7	A:	[ja.	A: [yes.
8	F:	ja daar zitten ze wel op, ja.	F: yes that's where they'll go for, yeah.
9		(1.3)	(1.3)
10		ja.	yes.
11		(1.2)	(1.2)
12		nou ja ik weet genoeg.	well yes I know enough.
13		ik heb eh dat gaat wel door dacht ik hoor bij Tromp.	I have eh that will be on I think with Tromp.
14	A:	ja?	A: yes?
15	F:	afijn maar dat weet je zelf [wel hè.	F: anyway but you know that yourself [right.
16	A:	[ja dat denk ik ook wel.	A: [yes I think so too.

Topic closings consume a total of 353 devices altogether; the length of the closings ranges from zero to 21 devices. Most topic closing sequences (71 of the total of 108 topic changes) consist of two to four devices.

Table 4.2 shows *which* topic closing devices occur most often in the 108 topic changes.

Table 4.2: Types of devices occurring in topic closing sequences.

Type of topic closing device	*Total number of occurrences*	*Occurrence in number of topic closings (N=108)*	
Small talk	33	7	(6%)
Summary	61	46	(43%)
Arrangement	12	10	(9%)
Acknowledgment	140	72	(67%)
Pause of (0.5) and above at tone unit boundary	83	62	(57%)
Joking remark, laughter	9	9	(8%)
Meta-linguistic expression	8	6	(6%)
Discourse marker(s)	7	7	(6%)
Total	353		

By far the most frequent devices are 'acknowledgment', 'pause', and 'summary' (with 140, 83, and 61 occurrences, respectively). Two of these three devices occur in the majority of all topic closings (acknowledgments occur in 67% and pauses in 57% of all topic closings), whereas the occurrence rate of the five other devices ranges from 43% (summary) to 6% (small talk, meta-linguistic expressions, discourse markers).

4.2.3 The length of topic changes

The total length of the topic changes, including the topic closing and the topic opening parts, ranges from two to 26 devices (see Table 4.3). Topic changes consisting of two acts hardly occur in any of the three types of settings (in all only five cases). Topic changes typically consume four to eight devices: 76 out of the 108 topic changes fall in this range; the spread within this range is fairly even, with a low of 13 occurrences for a four- and eight-device sequence, and a high of 18 for a seven-device sequence. Outside this range (sequence lengths below four and above eight devices), frequencies of occurrence are low: from one at the higher end (longest sequences) to around five at the lower end (short and medium sequences).

Table 4.3: Frequency of occurrence of topic change sequence in rank order of number of constituent devices.
Breakdown into three types of conversations.

Topic change sequence length in number of devices:	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*15*	*16*	*18-26*	*N*
D-D conversations	4	1	3	6	6	3	4	0	2	3	2	0	1	1	2	38
F-F conversations	1	0	5	7	3	6	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	29
F-D conversations	0	3	5	2	6	9	7	3	2	0	1	1	1	0	1	41
Total	5	4	13	15	15	18	13	6	4	4	3	1	2	1	4	108

4.3 Comparing native and mixed discourse

In this section, I will compare the three types of conversations (native Dutch, native French, and mixed) with regard to two aspects of topic changes: their length, and the types of devices used. I will look especially at the differences between native conversations on the one hand, and mixed conversations on the other, because such differences may reveal a possible influence of the use of a foreign language on discourse organization.

4.3.1 Length of topic changes compared

As already mentioned in Section 4.2.3, in all three types of settings, topic changes typically involve two extra acts. In general, the three types of settings do not differ much with regard to the length and the frequency of occurrence of topic changes (see Table 4.3 above). For all three types of settings the sequence lengths with the highest frequencies fall in the range from four to eight devices.

4.3.2 Topic opening activities compared

When one compares the kinds of devices most frequently occurring in topic opening sequences, the three types of settings show some differences in frequency of use; however, these differences do not distinguish between native and mixed discourse, but single out special characteristics of native French discourse. Table 4.4 gives an overview of the devices used in topic opening sequences in the three different settings.

Table 4.4:Types and average number of devices occurring in topic opening sequences. Breakdown into three types of conversations.

	D-D	*F-F*	*F-D*
	n	n	n
Definitional acts:			
Presentation of the problem	1.00 (38)	1.00 (29)	1.00 (41)
Interlocutor's uptake	1.00 (38)	.93 (27)	1.00 (41)
Optional additional devicesin topic opening sequences:			
Elaborated presentation of problem	.52 (20)	.45 (13)	.68 (28)
Separate presentation of issue	.26 (10)	.17 (5)	.10 (4)
Meta-linguistic expression	.29 (11)	.59 (17)	.22 (9)
Interlocutor's acknowledgment	.03 (1)	.17 (5)	.15 (6)
Repetition	.11 (4)	.0 (0)	.10 (4)
Softener	.13 (5)	.03 (1)	.10 (4)
Pause	.47 (18)	.31 (9)	.59 (24)
Others	.21 (8)	.17 (5)	.22 (9)
Total	4.03(153)	3.83(111)	4.15(170)
Number of topic opening sequences	38	29	41

In both native Dutch and mixed discourse, the use of additional devices in a topic opening sequence is most often due to elaborations on the problem presentation and to pauses; by contrast, in native French discourse, additional devices first of all occur as 'meta-linguistic expressions' and, only secondarily as elaborations of the problem presentation. The only device which shows a statistically significant difference in frequency of use is the meta-linguistic expression, where native French discourse shows a higher frequency of use as compared to both

native Dutch and mixed discourse. The chi-square test for native French vs native Dutch discourse shows 5.30 ($df = 1$, $p < .05$); for native French vs mixed discourse, it is 9.73 ($df = 1$, $p < .01$). Native Dutch and mixed discourse show no significant difference in this respect.[4] Meta-linguistic expressions occur, in my data, either as complete acts in topic opening sequences, or, alternatively, they combine with some of the other acts used in such sequences. For instance, in example (5), a meta-linguistic expression and the presentation of the issue are combined: French *oui je voulais vous poser une question heu justement à propos de CLIENT-ROI.* Note that when the meta-linguistic expression co-occurs with another device, it has been categorized under the other one.

Even if we disregard the possibility of combination with another device, and consider the total number of topic changes where one or more meta-linguistic expressions is used, results agree with those described above. In the native French conversations, a great majority of topic changes have meta-linguistic expressions (23 topic changes or 79%), whereas in both the native Dutch and the mixed discourse meta-linguistic expressions are used in about one third of the topic changes (respectively 14 or 37%, and 15 or 37%). The high frequency of meta-linguistic expressions in topic changes also distinguishes the native French business talk from other types of discourse, while native Dutch and mixed business talk seem to be more akin to other types of conversations in this respect. (Note that the figures of the number of topic changes with one or more meta-linguistic expressions do not occur in one of the Tables.)

In Section 4.2.1 above, I have divided the devices occurring in topic opening sequences into three classes: acts carrying new information, uptake, and topic-less devices. Table 4.5 represents the average number of occurrences per topic opening sequence of each of these three types of activities in the three settings.

Table 4.5: Average number of acts presenting new information versus topic-less devices and uptake per topic opening sequence. Breakdown into three types of conversations.

	D-D	*F-F*	*F-D*
Acts with new information	1.79 (68)	1.62 (47)	1.78 (73)
Devices with no new information	1.24 (47)	1.28 (37)	1.37 (56)
Uptake	1.00 (38)	.93 (27)	1.00 (41)

The mixed setting shows a somewhat higher occurrence rate of topic-less devices as compared to the two native settings, but there are no statistically significant differences between the three settings. This means that, on the whole, the three settings do not differ as to the participants' effort at information transfer and other kinds of interactional work, at least as regards act sequencing.

4.3.3 Topic closing activities compared

In contrast to topic openings, topic closings do show differences between native and mixed discourse regarding the eight devices distinguished in topic closings. The results are given in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Average occurrence of different types of devices in topic closing sequences. Breakdown in three types of conversations.

Type of topic closing device	*D-D*	*F-F*	*F-D*
	n	*n*	*n*
Small talk	.13 (5)	.14 (4)	.59 (24)
Summary	.81 (31)	.55 (16)	.34 (14)
Arrangement	.16 (6)	.14 (4)	.05 (2)
Acknowledgment	1.45 (55)	1.24 (36)	1.20 (49)
Pause of (0.5) and above at tone unit boundary	.76 (29)	.45 (13)	1.00 (41)
Joking remark, laughter	.05 (2)	.07 (2)	.12 (5)
Meta-linguistic expression	.08 (3)	.17 (5)	.0 (0)
Discourse marker(s)	.08 (3)	.07 (2)	.05 (2)
Total	3.53(134)	2.83 (82)	3.34(137)
Number of topic closing sequences	38	29	41

With regard to the individual devices used, the average occurrence rates per topic closing sequence show that in mixed discourse (1) pauses occur more often as compared to the native French setting (chi-square is 5.47, df = 1, $p < .05$), and (2) fewer summaries are used than in either of the native settings (native Dutch vs mixed: chi-square 8.16, df = 1, $p < .01$; native French vs mixed: chi-square 3.75, df = 1, $p < .05$). In addition, the mixed settings also show a much higher rate of small talk acts; however, as explained in Section 4.2.2, this high score is mainly due to one single instance consisting of 21 devices. Note further that, just as in topic openings, the native French data here have the highest score of meta-linguistic expressions (see note 4 of this Chapter). Still, the overall score is much lower than in topic opening sequences; this observation corresponds with general findings on topic closings, namely that closings are less explicitly marked than openings (see Scholtens & Stalpers 1982).

4.4 Preference organization of topic change in business talk

So far, the analyses have not shown any major differences in topic changes between native and mixed discourse. Still, as I will demonstrate in this section,

the results reveal certain characteristics of business talk in general which seem to run counter to the assumption that participants in business talk favor the most efficient solution, the one requiring the least expenditure of linguistic material, and thus, the least time spent in discourse.

Conversational analysts argue that verbal behavior is guided by so-called 'preference organization', where 'preference' is understood as a structural label, akin to the notion of markedness as commonly used in morphology (Levinson 1983: 332-345), where it is usually related to the presence of more linguistic material (Lyons 1968: 79). Thus, a preferred sequence is characterized by structural simplicity, implying the use of less material: the unmarked case, as it were. A dispreferred sequence, on the other hand, is structurally complex, consuming more material, and hence marked. Moreover, it is assumed that dispreferred actions tend to be avoided.

While markedness is described in terms of structural complexity, preference organization uses another criterion, namely frequency of use. Preferring one type of sequence over another "corresponds to the ranking from the most frequently used to the least used resource" (Levinson 1983: 341). Combining the two criteria, one could hypothesize that the most frequent forms of topic change are structurally the most simple. This hypothesis would seem to rhyme well with our general expectations regarding business talk, namely that participants would favor the shortest, and thus simplest, solution to a given discourse problem. However, as the following will show, the structurally simplest types of topic change sequences are not the most frequent ones in business talk analyzed here.

4.4.1 Degrees in marking topic change

I will assume that markedness in topic changes, and thus structural complexity, increases with the number of communicative devices. The topic change with the simplest structure is one where no closing devices are used and where the topic opening shows only the first speaker's presentation of the problem and interlocutor's uptake. As Table 4.3 above has shown, the complexity of topic changes varies from two to 26 devices. Typically a structurally simple preferred change of topic could look like the one in the following example (9), where the shift from speaking about the delivery of specially outfitted trucks (lines 1 through 5) to speaking about their price (line 6 and further)) takes place without the use of any additional devices.

(9) DD-T10:V:B87
A and F are discussing the delivery time of hydraulic truck parts ordered by F. In line 6, A addresses a new problem, the price of products.

1 A:	zal ik ze alle vier in de bouwvak zetten?	A: shall I put them all four in the summer holidays?

2 F: doe dat maar joh.	F: that is alright.
3 (0.8)	(0.8)
4 A: met één P hè?	A: with one P right?
5 F: ja allemaal met één P.	F: yes all with one P.
6 A: dus wij hadden samen al een prijs afgesproken.	A: thus we already had agreed upon a price.
7 F: ja éénendertig dacht ik hè?	F: yes thirty-one I thought right?
8 A: even kijken.	A: let me look.
9 (1.0)	(1.0)

However, most topic changes have additional structural markings in their topic closing and/or topic opening parts. In terms of frequency of use, my data show that topic changes with five to six devices are preferred in native Dutch discourse, with five to seven devices in native French discourse, and with seven to eight devices in mixed settings (see Table 4.3). Clearly, in business talk, the structurally simplest structure (with two devices) is not the most frequent one.

There seems to be a rationale for the fact that topic changes in business talk are most often marked by several additional devices. As stated in Chapter 2, business talk is to a certain extent preplanned, and participants come with a rather fixed agenda. Therefore, sudden topic 'jumps' are more common here than topic changes that occur 'naturally', as is the case in casual conversation (Schegloff & Sacks 1974). If topics do not naturally belong to the same conceptual set, they tend to be marked somehow. In this view, topic change devices serve as conversational links. However, as the following section (4.4.2) will show, topic change devices serve other purposes as well, namely to prevent the premature closing of a topic, and, by doing so, to avoid interactional irritation.

4.4.2 The function of marking in topic changes

A closer look at the data with respect to what I call 'topic conflict'[5] suggests that topic change devices can function as discourse organizers from a social point of view. That is, the marking foreshadows topic change in such a way that the interlocutors feel free to either accept or reject the upcoming change. Let me show this with some examples.

Topic conflict arises from topic interruptions, simultaneous topic starts, or rejections of topic change. Topic interruptions occur when a topic is abandoned before an understanding is reached: no practical solution is found, or the interlocutors agree that for the moment, no solution is possible. Simultaneous topic starts are instances where both participants consider a given problem as solved and simultaneously begin a new topic of their own. A topic change is rejected when one of the participants, believing that an acceptable solution has been reached, starts out on a new topic, while some other participant does not consider the first topic to have been brought to a conclusion, and says so. The

division of the data into discourse topics revealed 14 instances of topic conflict. Example (10) below illustrates a case of topic interruption; (11), a case of simultaneous topic start. For a rejection of a topic closing and topic opening, see examples (12) and (13).

(10) DD-2:B14
Y and F are potential buyers of a piece of land. They demonstrate their trustworthiness by talking about their good relationship with the municipality which issues permits for construction plans. This topic is interrupted when N asks for factual information about the company (line 2).

1 Y:	nou O.K. (0.6) de gemeente heeft vertrouwen in ons bedrijf uitgesproken.	Y: well O.K. (0.6) the municipality has shown confidence in our company.
2 N:	u is plaats u heeft een plaatselijk bedrijf?	N: you're a local you have a local business?
3	sorry als ik [vragen mag.	sorry if I may [ask.
4 F:	[nee.	F: [no.
5 Y:	wat zegt u?	Y: what did you say?
6 N:	u bent een plaatselijke aannemer of eh.	N: you are a local contractor or eh.
7 Y:	nee nee nee nee uit **.	Y: no no no no from **.

(11) FD-2:B160
N, a wine importer from Holland, visits C's wine cellars in the Beaujolais region. He wants to import C's wines. While N and C talk about wine tasting, they both start a new topic: C wants to talk about another of his costumers, another Dutch importer (lines 1 and 2). N, however, starts to talk about having exclusive import rights for C's wines (line 4). He interrupts his own utterance in order to answer C's question. After that, he again starts to introduce his own topic (line 6).

1 C:	est-ce que vous avez une question vis-à-vis de ce monsieur?	C: do you have a question concerning this gentleman?
2	vous connaissez cette société?	do you know this company?
3	(1.0)	(1.0)
4 N:	hum, je vous dis aussi?	N: hum, I also want to tell you?
5	oui non je ne connaisse [!] pas.,	yes no I do not know.,
6	je vous dis aussi (0.5) heu.	I also want to tell you (0.5) eh.
7	si vous voulez travailler en exclus en exclusivité avec quelqu'un en Hollande	if you want to work exclus exclusively with somebody in Holland

(12) FD-1:146
F is explaining to N why he wants to buy the apparatus N is selling.

1 F:	c'est que c'est un des rares services dans dans l'hôpital qui, qui soit bénificiaire quoi?	F: because it's one of the few services in in the hospital which, which is profitable right?

2		(0.5)	(0.5)
3		mm il y a des services lourds qui qui demandent énormément de d'investissements.	mm there are hefty services which which require enormous investments.
4	N:	oui.	N: yes.
5	F:	qui rapportent très peu quoi?	F: which bring in very little right?
6	N:	très peu hein.	N: very little yeah.
7	F:	oui.	F: yes.
8	N:	oui c'est ça.,	N: yes that's it.,
9		alors O.K. ((LAUGHS)) bon ehm.	well O.K. ((LAUGHS)) right ehm.
10		(2.1)	(2.1)
11		je parce que, alors vous avez expliqué?	I because, well you have explained?
12		(0.8)	(0.8)
13	F:	non non encore une chose.	F: no no again something else.
14		peut-être pour ⌈heu les médicaments une chose,	maybe for ⌈eh the medicines one thing,
15	N:	⌊oui.	N: ⌊yes.
16	F:	qu'on ne parvient pas à déterminer avec les techniques classiques.	F: which we can't get determined with the classical methods.

(13) FF-1:B231
V and R are discussing the winter collection. They finish talking about corduroy trousers (lines 1 and 2). V then makes a meta-linguistic expression (line 4), which R takes up as an invitation to topic change. R counters this initiative by stating what he prefers to do first (*d'abord*, line 5). V immediately grants R's request by giving a completion.

1	V:	tu as des coloris dans les rouges, dans les roses pour la femme.,	V: you have some colored ones, red ones and pink ones for women.,
2		tu as des coloris très mode.	you have some very fashionable colors.
3		(2.0)	(2.0)
4		alors ce qu'on va faire Léon bon.	so what we will do Léon well.
5	R:	moi ce que je voudrais d'abord faire si tu veux c'est de bon reprendre les les bases ⌈du jean denim.	R: what I want to do first if you agree is going well over the the basics ⌈of the blue jeans again.
6	V:	⌊en coupe étroite.	V: ⌊tight fitting.

The term 'topic conflict' implies a normative view of sequential topic organization: a conversation is thought of as a problem-solving activity, where the discussion topics neatly follow one another. Such behavior may be the general norm, but, like in other conversations, this norm is subject to violation, and there are strategies for dealing with such violations. As a closer look at the instances of topic conflict will show, in business talk, conversationalists sooner or later pick up an interrupted topic in order to finish it completely.

First of all, neither the intruding nor the preempted topic are altogether dismissed in the 14 observed instances of topic conflict. In other words, there is a fair chance that any topic brought into the discussion will eventually be dealt with. Thus, an interrupted topic is suspended rather than aborted: without exception, it is soon picked up again and continued. Note that in example (10), N apologizes (*"sorry"*) for interrupting the current topic. Simultaneous topic initiations are resolved amicably, in such a way that both topics are dealt with in succession. Disagreements about topic closings and initiations are respected by the participants: desired topic continuations are commonly accepted.

Second, as examples (10) and (12) also suggest, a continuation of the current topic is favored over a premature topic change. In (10), this is evidenced both by N's apology for interrupting the ongoing topic and the interlocutors' subsequent preference for continuing the discussion about the interrupted topic, rather than changing to another topic (introduced again at a later stage of the conversation). In (12), F's protest, following N's meta-linguistic summary marker, is immediately acknowledged. Finishing with the current topic before moving on to another one seems to be the 'rule of conduct'. This is further highlighted by the only case of interactional conflict in the data where one speaker's refusal to continue a topic is met by reproach on the part of the other: a clear instance of topic opening rejection. Subsequently, an argument develops when, in spite of this rejection, the first participant's wish to continue the current topic is not acknowledged by the other. The continuation of the current topic is thus delayed until the newly introduced topic has been treated extensively. Cf. example (14):

(14) FF-1:C131
R wants to continue the current topic, which had to do with the orders for the season. V, however, wants to start talking about a publicity campaign. After a dispute over talking rights, V's topic is treated first, after which R's wish to continue is fulfilled.

1	V: oui alors je t'expliquais tout à l'heure heu	V: well I just explained to you eh
2	R: tu as pas tu as pas heu dépassé les quantités-là hein?	R: you haven't exceeded the amounts have you?
3	V: je t'ai je t'ai fait les quantités.	V: I wrote down I wrote down the quantities.
4	heu de toutes façons je te confirme comme d'habitude.	in any case I will confirm as usual.
5	(0.6)	(0.6)
6	et oui je te parlais il y a, il y a cinq minutes de la campagne de publicité.	and well about about five minutes ago I talked about the publicity campaign.
7	(0.6)	(0.6)
8	R: ouais.	R: yeah.
9	V: alors	V: well

10 R:	tu voudrais pas qu'on finisse la collection-là?	R: you don't want to finish the collection first?
11	(0.5)	(0.5)
12 V:	mais je vais te dire un petit mot quand même parce que	V: but I'm going to tell you something anyway because
13 R:	ça t'a ça t'arrange pour me pour m'entendre plus ça après non?	R: that's that's alright for you so you don't have to listen to me anymore.
14 V:	non c'est pas pour t'entendre plus.	V: no it's not because I don't want to listen to you.
15	non c'est surtout pour que tu saches un petit peu bon ben les les efforts qu'on va faire pour vous aider à revendre tous ces volumes.	no it's mainly that you know that we do something to help you resell all this stuff.
16	(0.5)	(0.5)
17	puisque tu auras pas l'impression qu'on soit là uniquement pour te vendre de la marchandise.	so you won't get the impression that we're only here to sell you goods.
18	(1.2)	(1.2)
19	heu on a trois grandes campagnes.	eh we have three big campaigns.

First, V announces that he is going to talk about a 'new' topic (which he, by the way, had already introduced earlier (line 1)). R then checks what V has put down in writing regarding the current topic (line 2). V gives an explanation, whereupon he once again tries to introduce the new topic (line 6). R expresses his wish to finish the current topic first (line 10). V then again introduces his new topic (line 12). In a renewed challenge of V's move, R accuses him of trying to abort the current topic before it is finished (line 13). Despite this criticism, V again tries to bring up his topic (line 19), and finally succeeds. The aborted topic is eventually continued after V's topic has been given extensive treatment.

In sum, business conversations are characterized by a strong preference to finish a given topic before starting out on a new one; 'finishing' implies that both parties feel a solution has been reached. This conclusion is based on the observation that whenever topics do not get to be finished, either (a) a possible interruption is accompanied by some kind of repair move (for instance, an apology or a protest), or (b) the interaction as such has become problematic. Furthermore, as we have seen, in business conversations, all topics which are brought to the fore are eventually discussed. Whenever several topics are started simultaneously, suspended topics are brought up again after the current topic has been finished. Thus, interlocutors in business conversations always get a chance to discuss a topic, regardless of whether or not the topic ties back, grammatically and topically, to previous talk.

On the basis of the above observations, I want to argue that topic change devices are used for challenging a topic closing/opening initiative, without interfering in topic talk. Such devices form slots in a topic change sequence by

means of which a speaker indicates that he or she is ready for a topic change which, incidentally, does not have to take place right away: it is up to the interlocutor to ratify the topic change. By using closing devices, the speaker, in a clearly recognizable manner, leaves the level of topic talk. Some of the opening devices function similarly; others instead protract communication by gradually presenting new information over a sequence of acts. Thus, the typical pattern in business talk is that, after a topic change device has been used by one speaker, the interlocutor has the option to abort the topic change, without having to interrupt the topic on the content level.

4.5 Conclusions

The analyses presented in this chapter reveal few differences between native and mixed discourse, as regards topic changes in business talk. In all three settings, the distribution of topic changes over different sequence lengths is virtually the same; yet, the topic change length with the highest frequency of occurrence is somewhat longer in the mixed setting than in either native setting.

As regards the kind of devices used, topic opening sequences show no differences between native and mixed discourse. However, differences are found between the native French and the other two settings as to the use of meta-linguistic expressions (which is much higher in the native French setting), and between the native French and the mixed settings as to the occurrence of pauses (which are more frequent in the mixed setting). By contrast, topic closings do show differences between mixed and native settings: the mixed discourse contains more pauses and fewer summaries than either native setting.

These results do not confirm the expectations formulated at the end of Chapter 3, namely that mixed discourse is likely to be characterized by more redundancy strategies as compared to native settings. One would expect an increase of redundancy strategies in topic changes to result in problem-elaborating acts, more clause-external modifications (i.e., more softeners), more meta-linguistic expressions, summaries, and acknowledgments. None of these occur more frequently in the mixed settings than in any of the native settings; on the contrary: most redundancy strategies are used with more or less the same frequencies in mixed as in either native settings (the exception being summaries, which actually turn out to be less often in mixed discourse). As to topic boundaries, the only device which is used far more often in mixed discourse than in the two others, is the pause. Its high frequency can be explained by the fact that, from the point of view of grammar and lexicon, pauses are easy to perform, whereas all other strategies require a more sophisticated coding competence.

In sum, mixed and native settings do not differ significantly in the number of devices used for establishing topic change. This leads to the preliminary conclusion that, in the present framework, the use of a foreign language has no influence on the amount of effort put into a topic change. The only manifest difference is a certain 'preference' for an easy-to-code strategy in the mixed discourse, where 'preference' is understood in accordance with the conversational analysts' criteria of highest frequency of use and structural simplicity. (However, as we will see below, in Chapter 6, this preliminary explanation cannot be upheld, as the occurrence rate of pauses in disagreement sequences turns out to be lower in the mixed setting as compared to native Dutch conversations.)

The analyses of topic changes have revealed that topic changes carried out with the help of additional devices are a common phenomenon in business talk. One may wonder why this is so: the use of additional devices is more time-consuming, and thus seems to go against the grain of business-like behavior. The rationale for their common use may be found in the specific characteristics of business conversations. The two parties involved in the negotiation start out with clear expectations and pre-defined agendas. They know in advance that they have to come to conclusions with regard to certain specific topics. They cannot allow themselves the luxury of letting topics come up 'naturally' (Schegloff & Sacks 1974: 257) let alone of taking the risk of not getting their topics discussed at all. However, as the examples of topic conflict also show, topic organization in business talk is not completely arbitrary. Apparently, interlocutors rely on certain assumptions about appropriate conduct in discourse: topics are suspended, not simply discontinued. They are considered inappropriate, because they carry the risk that a topic will not be treated conclusively. Also, leaving a topic unfinished is a potential source of irritation. By using topic change devices the speaker creates opportunities for the interlocutor to change the proposed change in the discourse (to close the current topic and to start a new one).

Thus, the function of topic change devices is not only to create an interpretive frame for an episode of talk (Goffman 1974), they may also announce an upcoming action, which can still be aborted easily, should the other party object. Also, by using topic change devices, speakers display their awareness of the fact that what they are introducing is not a natural continuation of the current topic.

5 FINDING THE RIGHT WORDS

The problem of finding the right words is not specific to any particular type of conversation, business or other. Furthermore, it occurs both in native and mixed conversations. A particular case of word-finding problems occurs when one speaker furnishes an expression to complete his interlocutor's utterance; this will be called 'completion'. Naturally, such word-finding problems are more likely to occur when one uses a foreign language than when one uses one's own. It comes, therefore, as no surprise that completion sequences occur rather often in the French-Dutch conversations.

I will show that completion sequences, that is, sequences consisting of an act of completion plus subsequent communicative acts, are typically longer in mixed discourse than in the native French and native Dutch conversations.

The present chapter will show, on the basis of detailed analyses of all such sequences in the data, that the greater length of completion sequences in mixed conversations is due to the participants' greater effort in ascertaining mutual acceptance of a proposed completion.

5.1 Definition of completion sequence

A completion sequence consists of the communicative acts that the participants perform when trying to find the correct wording for a particular problem. Completion is a kind of 'repair mechanism', as defined by Schegloff et al. (1977) (see Chapter 3; Schiffrin 1987: 74), where 'repair' is considered to be a speech activity during which speakers locate and, if need be, replace a prior information unit where there may have been problems of speaking, hearing, or understanding. During the time that speakers are explicitly working on adjusting *prior* information before responding to it in upcoming talk, the ongoing flow of discourse is interrupted, and the conversation stalls on the content level. Characteristic for completion sequences (as opposed to most other repair mechanisms) is that it is the speaker who has difficulties in *producing* a clear and intelligible utterance, and not primarily the recipient who has a problem of hearing or understanding. Recipient problems may, of course, arise in completion sequences as a consequence of the speaker's lacking competence.

Communicative acts involved in repairs can be considered to be meta-communicative in the sense that the participants are consciously working on the process of discourse. A completion initiates an exchange which focuses on an aspect of the conversation as a topic in its own right; the participants thus leave

the content level of the conversation, and talk about matters of language or communication instead. Once the repair is achieved, they return to the content level and continue their conversation.

For the purposes of the present analysis, I have included all instances where one speaker completes the utterance of another, regardless of whether or not there is any overt sign indicating that the speaker has a formulation problem. Examples (1) and (2) illustrate the kind of sequence studied. They are taken from the French-Dutch and the Dutch-Dutch material, respectively.

(1) FD-1:238-244 D explains a medical instrument which he is trying to sell to F.

1 D:	parce que ça c'est le coeur.	D: because that is the heart.
2 F:	c'est ça.	F: right.
3 D:	c'est une	D: that's a
4	(0.8)	(0.8)
5 F:	la pompe.	F: the pump.
6 D:	la pompe.	D: the pump.
7 F:	mm.	F: mm.
8 D:	en combination [!] avec une certaine colonne.	D: together with some kind of column.

(2) DD-1:D40-D44
S explains his remodeling plans for his restaurant. S and C rent the restaurant from a third person who is also present.

1 S:	dat ze een deur pakken.	S: that they grab a door.
2	dat ze dan in de	that they then into the
3	(0.6)	(0.6)
4 C:	toiletruimte.	C: toilet space.
5 S:	in de toilet komen.	S: enter the toilet.
6	en dan daarnaast een deur dat je in de woning komt.	and then next to it a door which brings you into the residence.

Completions which occur spontaneously, that is, without being prompted by hesitations on the part of the other speaker have been subsumed under the category 'back channel' activities: the hearer expresses agreement with the first speaker "by volunteering appropriate words instead of mere indications of assent, such as 'yes'" (Yngve 1970: 574). Another interpretation of spontaneously produced completions is given by Tannen (1984). In her analysis of dinner table talk, she describes such sequences as strategies for expressing personal involvement. However, whatever the purpose of the completion, the *structure* of completion sequences does not depend on the presence or absence of hesitation signals, as will be shown below.

After presenting the structural analysis of completion sequences, I will argue that completions in negotiations function primarily as repair mechanisms for disturbances in the flow of discourse that are brought about by word-finding problems. The cooperative character of completions explains why they are suitable for other conversational purposes as well, such as expressions of assent and personal involvement.

There are 40 instances of completions in my data; most of the occurrences are in the French-Dutch conversations, as may be expected. These French-Dutch completions are highest, both in absolute numbers and relative to the average frequency of occurrence per unit of talk time (12.4 per hour as compared to 3.2 for the French-French and 5.5 for the Dutch-Dutch conversations). The native Dutch conversations contain relatively more completions than the native French ones. This difference disappears, however, if only completions involving speakers from opposite parties are considered (cf. Table 5.1; I will come back to the role of same-party speakers below[1]). Notice further that the French parties in my recordings are all one-member parties, whereas their Dutch counterparts may have several members. The three same-party completions in the French-Dutch conversations, therefore, are all performed by Dutch speakers.

Table 5.1:Occurrences of completion sequences in three types of conversations.

	D-D	*F-F*	*F-D*
Total number of occurrences	9	3	28
- addressee of same party	5	not applicable*	3
- addressee of opposite party	4	3	25
Total minutes of recordings	98	56	135
Frequency of occurrence per one hour of talk	5.5	3.2	12.4
Frequency of occurrence to addressee of opposite party per one hour of talk	2.4	3.2	11.1

* The F-F data consists of single member parties only.

In the next section, I will describe the structure of completion sequences in terms of the communicative acts used in order to find the right word and to redirect the conversation to the content level.

5.2 Structure of completion sequences

The completion sequences in the data call for the distinction of eight different structures. First, I describe the general structure of completion sequences; then I go on to present the various types in more detail.

The first two steps in a completion sequence are always the same. The first speaker (S1) starts an utterance which is syntactically incomplete (henceforth IU). At this point, S1 may implicitly or explicitly elicit the help of his interlocutor by signaling that he has a word-finding problem. These signals may take the form of hesitation markers (French *heu*, French *de, de, de, de*, and the like); an explicit request for completion (Dutch *wat is een eh een een een uitzondering* 'what is an eh an an an exception'); or pauses. Following S1's signal, a second speaker (S2) then suggests a completion (COMPL) of S1's utterance. Completion by S2 can also occur without previous elicitation on the part of the first speaker. All types of completion sequences with two or more occurrences contain both elicited and non-elicited completions. Therefore, as regards the structure of completion sequences, there seems to be no reason for making the distinction between elicited and non-elicited completions, suggested by Yngve (1970) and Tannen (1984) in their functional analyses.

The first two steps, IU and COMPL, can be said to define the situation. It is interesting to see how the participants continue from this point on. First, there are those sequences where the first speaker shows no objection against the COMPL. I call such sequences 'concurring sequences'. Among the concurring sequences, three different structures can be identified, which will be discussed in Section 5.2.1 below. Second, there are sequences where the first speaker is not happy with interlocutor's COMPL and feels a need to correct it, by formulating a rejection and/or presenting an alternative. I call these sequences 'non-concurring sequences'. There are in all five different structures that can be distinguished here; they will be discussed in Section 5.2.2. The following labels are used for characterizing the individual composite acts of completion sequences: Acknowledgment (ACK), Alternative (ALT), Rejection (REJ), Support (SUP), and Continuation (CONT). They are briefly characterized in the following.

- ACKNOWLEDGMENT (ACK): An ACK indicates that the interlocutor's remark is accepted as correct or unproblematic, for instance with regard to identifying a referent. A sign for ACK can be a short Dutch *hm* or a more articulate expression like French *c'est ça*. Previous research has shown that a (partial) repetition of an interlocutor's statement can function as an approval of, or agreement with, that statement (Mittner 1984, Schegloff 1978, Stalpers & Ulijn

1984). Therefore, the category ACK also includes repetitions of what the other speaker has said. Such repetitions need not be verbatim: often, the utterance is elaborated with a preposition or an adjective, or the wording of the completion is altered in such a way that its part of speech category is changed (e.g., from adverb to adjective).

- ALTERNATIVE (ALT): An ALT is an utterance by the first speaker, formulated as an alternative to a completion. It can be intended as an exclusive alternative, but it can also be added to the COMPL in order to make the referential information more specific. In the latter case, the ALT is worded in such a way that IU (plus COMPL) plus ALT form one conceptual unit. An ALT-utterance typically forms a syntactic unit together with an IU, and copies the prosodic and syntactic structure of the COMPL. An ALT can be considered as an implicit rejection.
- REJECTION (REJ): An REJ is an unequivocal expression of disagreement with the completion offered. It includes negations such as Dutch *nee* and French *non*.
- SUPPORT (SUP): By means of a SUP, a speaker provides information which underscores the credibility of a statement. Depending on the context, a SUP can be an explanation, a justification, or a defense of a position.
- CONTINUATION (CONT): By CONT, I mean a communicative act which is not a reaction to the preceding completion. Rather, with a CONT, the conversation moves forward to a new focal point, as the speaker(s) react(s) to the act conveyed in the IU plus its (altered) COMPL. At this point, the participants continue the conversation on the content level. A CONT does not belong to the completion sequence proper. Moreover, the label does not indicate a communicative function of the act. It is a purely descriptive label indicating the end of the completion sequence.

To illustrate the above description, I will present the earlier examples (1) and (2), with the appropriate labels for the communicative acts listed to the left (examples (1'), (2')).

(1')

	D: parce que ça c'est le coeur.	D: because that is the heart.
	F: c'est ça.	F: right.
IU	D: c'est une	D: that's a
	(0.8)	(0.8)
COMPL	F: la pompe.	F: the pump.
ACK	D: la pompe.	D: the pump.
ACK	F: mm.	F: mm.
CONT	D: en combination [!] avec une certaine colonne.	D: together with some kind of column.

(2')

	S: dat ze een deur pakken.	S: that they grab a door.
IU	dat ze dan in de	that they then into the
	(0.6)	(0.6)
COMPL	C: toiletruimte.	C: toilet space.
ACK	S: in de toilet komen.	S: enter the toilet.
CONT	en dan daarnaast een deur dat je in de woning komt.	and then next to it a door which brings you into the residence.

5.2.1 Concurring sequences

The data call for a three-way distinction between concurring sequences. The shortest sequence occurring in the data consists of an IU plus COMPL only (Type I). In this case, there are no audible reactions to the completion, whose meta-communicative aspect remains unacknowledged. The IU and the COMPL together form one informative act, to which the next act is a reaction. As a result, the talk on the content level is not interrupted. Example (3) illustrates this.

(3) DD-2:B60-B66 Type I
A and N are trying to sell land to Y.

	A: dus u zegt ik koop.	A: so you say I buy.
	ik koop het voor prijs (0.5) X?	I buy it for price (0.5) X?
	Y: X.	Y: X.
	A: ik betaal morgen van de week honderdduizend gulden.	A: tomorrow this week I pay a hundred thousand guilders.
	Y: juist.	Y: correct.
IU	A: en ik heb tijd ⌈tot	A: and I have time ⌈until
COMPL	Y: ⌊tot één april negentienhonderdvierentach tig (0.6) om ja of nee te zeggen.	Y: ⌊until April first nineteen-hundred-eightyfour (0.6) to say yes or no.
CONT	N: die rente kunt u er nooit van maken.	N: you can never make that interest on it.

Type II, the next shortest type, involves one additional act prior to the interlocutor's reaction to the IU plus COMPL. The COMPL is then acknowledged by the first speaker. Examples (4) and (5) are taken from French-Dutch and French-French conversations, respectively.

(4) FD-T11:83-86; Type II

F: mais ils peuvent toujours changer.	F: but they can always change.
(1.8)	(1.8)

IU	N: mais il n'y a pas de de de de de de heu	N: but there is no no no no no no eh
COMPL	F: de raison.	F: no reason.
ACK	N: de raison ici à ce moment.	N: no reason here at the moment.
CONT	F: ben les raisons c'est des problèmes financiers hein.	F: well the reasons are financial problems right.

(5) FF-T10:92-95; Type II

IU	G: si jamais j'ai pas ces sacs je suis vraiment heu,	G: if I don't get those bags I'll really be eh,
COMPL	B: dans la panade.	B: in great trouble.
ACK	G: en quelque sorte. ((LAUGHS))	G: of sorts. ((LAUGHS))
CONT	O.K. vous rappelerez à l'agence?	O.K. can you call the office back?

The next type of concurring sequence, Type III, is characterized by yet another additional step. Its structure is like that of Type II, except that the second speaker also offers an acknowledgment. Consider example (6).[2]

(6) FD-1:B210-215; Type III

IU	N: mais combien de temps vous vous pensez ça coûte pour heu (1.1) pour avoir un système	N: but how much time you you think it will take to eh (1.1) to have a system
COMPL	F: la mise au point?	F: the installation?
ACK	N: pour le [!] mise au point? pour mise au point d'une heu	N: for the installation? for installation of a
ACK	F: c'est ça. (1.0)	F: that's right. (1.0)
CONT	je sais pas. dépend d'abord du temps qu'on peut y consacrer hein?	I don't know. depends first of all on the time we can spend right?

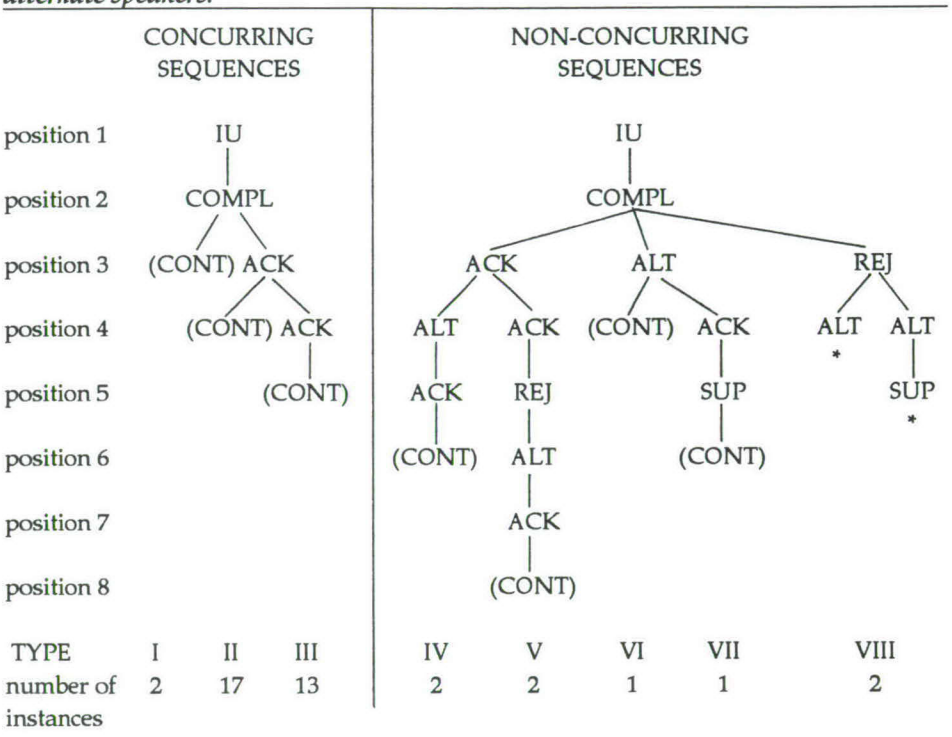
The general form of the three types of concurring sequences can be summarized as in (7). 'S1' and 'S2' indicate first and second speaker, respectively; the brackets indicate an optional act:

(7) IU + COMPL (+ ACK (+ ACK))
S1 S2 S1 S2

Concurring sequences thus consist of minimally two and maximally four acts, as can be seen from the left tree diagram in Table 5.2, showing the possible

combinations and orders of communicative acts constituting concurring completion sequences. The diagram displays the consecutive communicative acts used in completion sequences in top-to-bottom order. This presentation thus gives an overview of the selection points and the available options at particular act-positions within the sequence.

Table 2: Structure of completion sequences.
** = a second IU*
Note: Acts in subsequent positions are generally, but not always, performed by alternate speakers.



5.2.2 Non-concurring sequences

By definition, a completion sequence embodying some correction of the completion (either ALT or REJ) leads to longer sequences than when no correction is involved (as in Types I-III). However, most of the non-concurring sequences in my data show additional acts over and above the expected ones in accordance with the definition. There are at least three, at most twelve communicative acts involved, as can be seen from the right tree diagram in Table 5.2, showing the structure of these sequences, and contrasting their structure with that of the concurring sequences, which are displayed to the left.

The finding that non-concurring sequences are relatively longer than concurring sequences is in accordance with results of other recent research. Rejections and other forms of disagreements are socially dispreferred and are thus likely to be marked in the text by additional components. These additional components are usually described as 'mitigation' strategies, serving to reduce the possible negative effects of a speech act on the hearer (cf. Fraser 1980; Levinson 1983: 307-308).

The kinds of rejections I am dealing with in completion sequences have been described as "other-corrections" (Schegloff et al. 1977). This makes sense, for S1 corrects S2; however, these are other-corrections of a special kind. Since S1 is the origin of the utterance which S2 has completed, it is up to S1 to decide whether or not to accept the COMPL. One would, therefore, expect that disagreement about a suggested COMPL is less offensive and, therefore, less socially dispreferred. However, it turns out that a disagreement of this kind triggers the same kind of mitigation strategies as have been described for other kinds of disagreement sequences, such as repeats, ritualized agreements, and justifications (Pomerantz 1975). While it is true that the acts which account for the extra length of non-concurring sequences can indeed be interpreted as mitigation strategies, such acts perform other functions as well, such as acknowledging the interlocutor's contribution and providing the non-native speaker with some extra processing time, as I will show presently.

The conspicuous nature of non-concurring sequences and their relatively small number make it feasible to analyze them, however briefly, individually. Although some of the structures are evidenced by only one instance in my data, I have decided (for practical reasons) to treat them here as types in their own right (IV through VIII in Table 5.2).

The characteristic pattern of Type IV is that the COMPL is acknowledged by S1, upon which he furnishes an alternative (ALT). In the two cases available (examples (8) and (9) below), S1's ACK actually is a repetition of the COMPL. Subsequently, S1 reiterates the wording of his own IU, incorporating a marker to indicate that the alternative is an addition to S2's completion (*aussi* in (8) and *et* in (9)). S1's ALT is then acknowledged by S2 before the discussion continues.

(8) FD-1:71-77; Type IV
N explains the advantages of the instrument under discussion.

IU	N:	alors on peut je [pense que	N:	so one can I [think that
COMPL	F:	[avec la même colonne disons on peut faire, plusieurs types d'analyse.	F:	[with the same column let's say one can do, several types of analysis.

ACK	N:	ou avec la même colonne on peut on peut injecter heu plusieurs types d'analyse?	N:	or with the same column one can one can inject eh several types of analysis?
ALT		mais on peut aussi injecter peut-être heu deux mille trois mille, quatre mille fois.		but one can also inject maybe eh two thousand three thousand, four thousand times.
ACK	F:	bien sûr bien sûr.	F:	certainly certainly.
CONT	N:	et alors heu (0.9) /bff/ on a chez BOUHUYS on a fait la calculation [!] plusieurs fois.	N:	and so eh (0.9) /bff/ at BOUHUYS one has done the calculation several times.

(9) FD-1:E71-E75; Type IV
F wants to change the payment conditions of the valid offer. N cannot accept this. He proposes an alternative.

	N:	heu nous allons faire une nouveau heu nouveau [!] offre.	N:	eh we will make a new eh new offer.
IU		mais, et [avec heu et avec le		but, and [with eh with the
COMPL	F:	[avec le nouveau prix. ((LAUGHS))	F:	[with the new price. ((LAUGHS))
ACK	N:	nouveau prix.	N:	new price.
ALT		et avec les conditions qu'on veut heu chez chez le l'hôpital heu.		and with the conditions desired by by the the hospital eh.
ACK	F:	d'accord c'est ça.	F:	O.K. right.
CONT		et aussi une troisième (0.6) possibilité.		and also a third (0.6) possibility.

Why have I classified the utterances in question as ALTs? To understand this, we need additional contextual information. In example (8), the information contained in the COMPL of F's statement (referring to several *types* of analyses), had been offered earlier in the discussion, when F explained why he needed the new medical instrument rather than the existing one. It is already known to F that this instrument can perform several analyses; as a matter of fact, N has dwelt on this particular feature of the instrument a few utterances earlier. The information in the COMPL is not new, whereas N's utterance, classified as an ALT, introduces a new element into the discussion, namely the fact that the instrument can do *two or three thousand* analyses without having to have any parts replaced. In example (9), N's utterance qualifies as an ALT, because his information includes that contained in F's COMPL, as well as some more. That is, *avec les conditions qu'on veut heu chez chez le l'hôpital* refers not only to a new price (F's COMPL), but also to some other conditions, such as monthly payments instead of the proposed bi-weekly ones. In other words, N not only wants to change the price in the

contract, but there are also other terms of the contract that the hospital would like to have altered. Hence the classification 'ALT' of N's utterance.

I now turn to Type V. Here, S1 acknowledges the COMPL: his ACK is in turn acknowledged by S2. At this point S1 utters an REJ, which is then followed by an ALT. The two cases with this structure are shown in examples (10) and (11). In (10) N rejects the COMPL by using the same words, with an added negative: *pas*. In order to make his point, N has to explain the situation of his company. First he introduces a newly developed part (*colonne*). F acknowledges this contribution. N then continues to give more background information before coming up with what he actually wanted to state in his IU.

(10) FD-1:62-69; Type V
N explains the advantages of the instrument under discussion.

	N:	on peut on peut séparer (0.6) des (0.6) diverses,	N:	one can one can separate (0.6) the (0.6) different,
IU		anti-épileptiques [par exemple dans heu		anti-epileptics [for instance at eh
COMPL	F:	[c'est ça dans une seule fois quand même.	F:	[right at the same time even.
ACK	N:	dans dans une seule fois hein?	N:	at at the same time right?
ACK	F:	c'est ça (0.6) c'est ça.	F:	right (0.6) right.
REJ	N:	et alors pas directement aussi dans une seule fois?	N:	and then not directly also at the same time?
ALT		on on af on a fait une investition [!] dans une alors une [!] appareillage mais aussi dans une colonne.		one one h one has made an investment in a well an instrument but also in a column.
ACK	F:	mm.	F:	mm.
CONT	N:	alors on peut je pense que	N:	so one can I think that

In (11), the REJ is a straight *non non* followed by an ALT. What N says in his ALT actually amounts to what F said in his COMPL. It follows that N, the Dutchman, must have misunderstood the Frenchman's COMPL.

(11) FD-1:C176-C182; Type VI

IU	N:	O.K. pour heu pourque le l'air ne ne	N:	O.K. so eh so that the the air doesn't
COMPL	F:	pour empêcher le les échanges quoi?	F:	for preventing the the exchanges right?
ACK	N:	oui.	N:	yes.
ACK	F:	c'est [ça.	F:	that's [right.
REJ	N:	[non non.	N:	[no no.

ALT	pourque l'air, n'entre plus dans le dans le solvant.	so that the air, doesn't enter into into the solvent.
ACK	F: c'est ça.	F: that's right.
CONT	N: alors normalement heu il faut (1.0) heu (2.0) avoir le le vacuum.	N: thus normally eh one needs (1.0) eh (2.0) to have the the vacuum.

Type VI is represented by example (12); it is the shortest non-concurring sequence in the data. Part of the COMPL is repeated by A, who after a pause ends up using a different verb than that originally introduced by N. A then immediately continues the conversation.

(12) DD-2:C33-C36; Type VI
A and N, members of one party, explain the arrangement with the current tenant.

IU	A: en als wij voor één juli vieren-tachtig (0.6)	A: and if we before July first of eighty-four (0.6)
COMPL	N: of de nieuwe eigenaar sloopt?	N: or the new owner tears down?
ALT	A: of de nieuwe eigenaar (0.5) eh de huuropzegging doet?	A: or the new owner (0.5) eh gives notice?
CONT	dan moeten wij betalen veertigduizend gulden.	then we must pay forty thousand guilders.

The events referred to by the two verbs, *slopen* (to tear down) in the COMPL and *huuropzegging doen* (to give notice) in the ALT, constitute two separate points in the negotiation. The parties have to reach a settlement about the termination of the lease and about the demolition of the tenant-occupied buildings. A rectifies N's statement, incorporating the repetition into the alternative act, but marking the change by a pause.

Also in the next type, VII, the COMPL immediately triggers an ALT. But in contrast to the previous type, here, the ALT is followed by an ACK of the ALT and a SUP before S1 continues the discussion. Example (13) illustrates this.

(13) DD-1:E141-E148; Type VII
K and C discuss K's family relations with the public notary.

	K: nou eh ik, zou haast zeggen een achterneef.	K: well eh I, would say a second cousin.
IU	het is een eh	it's a eh
COMPL	C: verweg-neef.	C: distant-cousin.
ALT	K: nou (1.0) zijn vader en mijn vader waren neven. (0.5)	K: well (1.0) his father and my father were cousins. (0.5)
ACK	C: ja dus verweg.	C: yes that means distant.

SUP		oh ja ja bedoel ik. dat is een verweg-neef.	oh yes yes that's what I mean. that is a distant-cousin.
CONT	K:	ja ja maar dat was ergens nog wel vrij close familieverband.	K: yes yes but that were somewhere still rather close family ties.

C's COMPL contains a non-standard, made-up word. K's ALT consists of a description, preceded by a discourse particle *nou* (well), which can indicate that a rejection is to follow.[3] C acknowledges K's ALT in an elaborate way, by maintaining (SUP) that the word used by her amounts to the same thing as K's description; in this way, she removes the source of the (implicit) rejection. K's remark (CONT) is the beginning of the closing section of the whole conversation; this section consists of small talk about family relationships.

The last type of structure to be discussed is the one where a COMPL triggers a rejection (REJ): Type VIII. The two instances of REJ in the data are each followed by another incomplete utterance (IU) by S1 and a COMPL by S2. In other words, the REJ here initiates a new completion sequence. One instance has two cycles of completion sequences (example (14)), the other, represented in (15) below, has three.

(14) DD-2:255-B4; Type VIII
A explains what the architect Harteman has done for them. F is the architect working for the other party.

IU	A:	Harteman heeft meer gedaan tot nu toe als hij	A: Harteman has done more up to now than he
COMPL	F:	als hij betaald heeft gehad.,	F: than he has been paid for.,
REJ	A:	nee.	A: no.
ALT/IU		ook als	also than.
COMPL	F:	dat hij opdracht heeft gehad ja.	F: that he had been commissioned to do.
CONT	A:	maar dat allemaal in het kader van joh als je dat plan verder kan verkopen dan eh.	A: but all that with the idea that if you can resell that plan to others then eh.

A rejects F's COMPL and starts an ALT. Since F again interrupts him with a COMPL, this second completion sequence is of Type I: that is, the completion is immediately followed by a CONT.

The case of REJ illustrated in example (15) is complicated, as there are three persons involved in the completion sequence, two Dutchmen (N and M) and a Frenchman (F). Moreover, three languages are being used: French, Dutch (in italics), and English (capitalized). Here, the completions are jointly produced by both negotiating parties; two COMPL by the Frenchman and one by one of his Dutch colleagues. For structural reasons, the instance is counted as an 'opposite

party' case (for this term, and an explanation, see Section 5.3, below). N and F are the main actors in the conversation, while M more or less has the role of an observer on the sidelines.

(15) FD-3:243-B0; Type VIII
F wants to know from which producer N is buying medicated food at this time.

	N: nous n'avons pas le produit de DRESSLER hein?	N: we don't have the product of DRESSLER right?
IU	c'est c'est, c'est c'est c'est	it's it's, it's it's it's
COMPL	F: trop cher?	F: too expensive?
REJ	N: c'est, ne pas [!] trop cher.	N: it is, not too expensive.
ALT	on ne peut pas heu user [!].	we cannot eh use.
SUP/IU	parce que ce sont [!] des des des problèmes avec heu (1.4) des des de (0.5) heum (0.5) /ts/ *fijnheid* (0.6) *stof* heu.	because there are eh eh eh problems with eh (1.4) the the the (0.5) eh (0.5) /ts/ fineness (0.6) material eh.
COMPL	M: heu mm (0.6) IT'S NOT EH MICRONISED.	M: eh mm (0.4) IT'S NOT EH MICRONISED.
ACK	N: *ja*.	N: yes.
	(2.5)	(2.5)
SUP/IU	M: IT'S NOT eh	M: IT'S NOT eh
COMPL	F: PARTICLE SIZE.	F: PARTICLE SIZE.
ACK	N: PARTICLE SIZE.	N: PARTICLE SIZE.
ACK	M: PARTICLE SIZE.	M: PARTICLE SIZE.
ACK	N: THAT'S RIGHT.	N: THAT'S RIGHT.
	(2.4)	(2.4)
CONT	ça veut dire nous n'avons (0.5) nous avons à [!] ce moment (0.6) un producteur.	that means we don't have (0.5) we have at this moment (0.6) one producer.

The first of the three COMPLs in this sequence is offered by the Frenchman. N rejects this COMPL and instead, starts explaining what he means; doing this, he runs into some problems finding the right words, as becomes clear from his repeated hesitations. In the end, he utters the Dutch word, thus drawing M into the conversation, who then offers an explanation of the object in English. Syntactically, this is not a real completion, because it does not fit into N's IU. Clearly, M addresses the Frenchman, since he speaks English, rather than Dutch. N acknowledges M's description, using the Dutch word *ja*, but the Frenchman still does not react. M then tries another description, whereupon F furnishes another English term. Syntactically, this does not fit into M's IU, as a verb is missing: The noun "particle size" would fit in better with N's IU 4 lines earlier. Both N and M repeat F's COMPL. The final acknowledgment is provided by N.

Apart from M's contribution to the sequence and N's reaction to this, the second completion sequence among N and F turns out to be similar to Type III.

However, there is one difference: the final ACK is given by S1, rather than by S2. It is of some interest that N does his ACK in English, but continues the conversation in French. This kind of code-switching from one act to another seems to support my claim that completion sequences can be distinguished from the surrounding talk; that is, they are meta-communicative repair sequences. The use of English in this connection is that of an auxiliary language for purposes other than pursuing the content proper of the conversation.[4]

As the above discussion suggests, the non-concurring sequences do not follow a strict and clear pattern. There are too many optional acts that can be realized at the various positions. Yet, when native and mixed settings are distinguished, a considerable degree of regularity emerges even in these complex sequences.

5.3 Comparing native and mixed discourse

In this section, I will show how native and mixed conversations differ in the kinds of completion sequences produced.

A breakdown of the completion sequences in the data according to language setting and structural type is given in Table 5.3. The instances are divided among the three types of conversations under study: Dutch-Dutch, French-French, and French-Dutch. Furthermore, a distinction is made with respect to who is performing the completion: a member of the same party or a member of the opposite party. Representatives of one and the same party are in a 'double-bind' position, because they have to reckon with two addressees, having different concerns: viz. the opposite party and the members of their own party. The members of a negotiation team are supposed to keep in line, even if they do not agree on all points; internal conflicts should not be advertised to the other party. The existence of such a dilemma underlines the peculiar character of same-party rejections, as becomes manifest in the data's completion sequences.

Table 5.3:Number of completion sequences per type of structure and type of interlocutor.

'same' = member of the same negotiation party.
'opp' = member of the opposite negotiation party.

type of structure	*number of acts in completion sequence*	*D-D same-opp*		*F-F opp*	*F-D same-opp*		*total number of native completion sequences*	*total number of mixed completion sequences*
I	2		1		1		2	0
II	3	4	1	3	2	7	10	7
III	4					13	0	13
IV	5					2	0	2
V	7					2	0	2
VI	3	1					1	0
VII	5		1				1	0
VIII	5+		1			1	1	1

In general, completion sequences in mixed (F-D) conversations are longer than those in native conversations (D-D and F-F); this holds both for concurring sequences and non-concurring sequences. Statistical analysis shows a significant difference when the length of all native sequences is compared with those of mixed sequences (Mann-Whitney U-test yields $Z = 2.60$, $p < .01$). The longest completion sequences all occur in the F-D conversations and are performed between a Dutchman and a Frenchman.

This leads to a second observation, namely that completions by a member of the same party often go unacknowledged (Type I) or tend to result only in short sequences (Types II and VI). One could say that corrections among same-party members are interactionally reduced to a minimum. For same-party completions, the fact that a foreign language is spoken does not seem to make any difference in this respect, as is seen from both the D-D setting and the F-D settings, with the Dutchmen using French and occasionally English.

Let me now compare more closely the native and mixed instances. Here, I contrast opposite-party F-D instances with all the others (D-D, F-F, and same-party F-D). For the first group, I use the term 'mixed', for the latter 'native'. First, I will treat the concurring sequences. The structure with the highest frequency in the French-Dutch data is Type III, although Type II also includes relatively many mixed instances. Moreover, since this type is conspicuously absent in the rest of the data, it may be considered a salient feature of French-Dutch business conversations and perhaps a typical feature of cross-linguistic conversations in general. Thus, native instances of concurring sequences all belong to Types I and II, whereas mixed instances all belong to Types II and III. It is an important fact that, in sequences of Type III, S1 can be either a native or a non-native speaker. This

shows that the discourse pattern found in my analysis should be attributed to the interlanguage setting, rather than to the native or non-native speaker only.

We can thus distinguish two variants of the pattern of concurring sequences given in example (7), above. (16) is the basic pattern of native completion sequences representing Types I and II, where the brackets indicate an optional act. The pattern of mixed completion sequences representing Types II and III is given in (17).

(16) Pattern for native concurring completion sequences

act	IU	+ COMPL	(+ ACK)
speaker	S1	S2	S1
position	1	2	3

(17) Pattern for mixed concurring completion sequences

act	IU	+ COMPL	+ ACK	(+ ACK)
speaker	S1	S2	S1	S2
position	1	2	3	4

Mixed completion sequences are thus characterized by one optional extra acknowledgment act. What can be the rationale for inserting such an act? The occurrence of an ACK in position 3 by S1 is understandable, considering the fact that S1 is the originator of the informative unit, and that, therefore, S1 is likely to confirm the correctness of the COMPL. However, in Type III, with two ACKs being the typical pattern for mixed concurring sequences, there is plausibly no need for S2 to express agreement with his own COMPL or with S1's ACK. Nor is S2's ACK in all cases a hearer signal to indicate that the speaker assumes the hearer role, as has been argued by Yngve (1970). Consider again example (6), which is repeated here as number (6').

(6') FD-1:B210-215; Type III

IU	N: mais combien de temps vous vous pensez ça coûte pour heu (1.1) pour avoir un système	N: but how much time you you think it will take to eh (1.1) to have a system
COMPL	F: la mise au point?	F: the installation?
ACK	N: pour le [!] mise au point? pour mise au point d'une heu	N: for the installation? for installation of a
ACK	F: c'est ça. (1.0)	F: that's right. (1.0)
CONT	je sais pas.	I don't know.

dépend d'abord du temps qu'on peut y consacrer hein?	depends first of all on the time we can spend right?

N has a problem phrasing his question. F furnishes a COMPL, which is repeated by N. This repetition in turn is acknowledged by F's *c'est ça*. After that, F does not assume the hearer role; on the contrary, he answers N's question, thus taking a turn which redirects the conversation to the content level.

What, then, is the function of the second ACK, if it is not a role-switch marker? I want to suggest that it should be interpreted as a 'topic-less passing turn', to use a notion introduced by Schegloff and Sacks (1974). Literally, such turns are expressions of agreement or assent. Schegloff and Sacks use the notion of a topic-less passing turn in a very specific context, viz. as a possible pre-closing of a casual conversation and as a point where typically a topic change may occur (see Chapter 4, page 42). In my interpretation of the second ACK, I use the term 'topic-less passing turn' in a more general sense than do Schegloff and Sacks. My claim is that such turns have a crucial function not only in elaborating or closing a topic or conversation, but also within topical units, in creating a position in the discourse which leaves the interlocutor an option either to elaborate on the ongoing discourse unit, or to proceed to a new one. In the case of completion sequences, the option is between elaborating on the repair sequence and returning to the sustained topic.[5] The observation that mixed sequences in such cases are longer can now be explained more plausibly. Since all instances of extra ACK's involve a non-native speaker, the conversation in this case carries an increased potential of misunderstanding; hence, there seems to be a perceived need to give the interlocutor another chance to make corrections. As the comparison of native and mixed non-concurring sequences shows, non-native speakers do indeed make use of this opportunity.

Non-concurring sequences happening between speakers of the same language usually consume three to five acts. Mixed non-concurring sequences are typically longer, taking five, seven, and up to 12 acts before the conversation continues on the content level. This extra length can again be attributed to the need for the occurrence of additional acknowledgments, as is the case in concurring sequences (whose function was explained as that of topic-less passing turn).

Let us now turn to the eight completion sequences that do not fit the patterns I-III (one fifth of all sequences). There is one non-concurring type (VIII) in which we find both native and mixed non-concurring sequences. These are the instances where the COMPL is followed immediately by a REJ, which in turn triggers another completion sequence, thus establishing a recursive pattern. In other words, a rejected COMPL invites another COMPL proposal by S2, as schematically represented in (18):

(18) Pattern for completion sequences with immediate REJ:

act	IU	+ COMPL	+ REJ	+ ALT	(+SUP)	=IU	+ COMPL
speaker	S1	S2	S1	S1	(S1)		S2
position	1	2	3	4	(5)		5/6

The second completion sequence proceeds in a way which is typical of the respective linguistic settings. In the native sequence, the second IU triggers a short completion sequence (like Type I). In the mixed sequence, the second IU triggers a concurring sequence typical of mixed discourse (like Type III), that is, if we disregard the contributions by the third speaker, as I have suggested above (page 75). Thus, we find no differences between mixed and native discourse for the first part of the completion sequence. Seemingly, the necessity to deal with an explicit rejection overrides, so to speak, considerations regarding foreign language use. This interpretation is suggestive rather than definitive; further study is needed to establish it more firmly.

A clear pattern is revealed for the other non-concurring cases, where native and mixed instances belong to different types: Types IV and V comprise only mixed sequences; Types VI and VII only native ones. For these cases, two different patterns emerge, one for native non-concurring sequences, viz. (19), and one for mixed non-concurring sequences, viz. (20).

(19) Pattern for native non-concurring sequences (other than described in (18)):

act	IU	+ COMPL	+ ALT	(+ ACK	+ SUP)
speaker	S1	S2	S1	(S2	S2)
position	1	2	3	(4	5)

(20) Pattern for mixed non-concurring sequences (other than described in (18)):

act	IU	+ COMPL	+ ACK	(+ ACK	+ REJ)	+ ALT	+ ACK
speaker	S1	S2	S1	(S2	S1)	S1	S2
position	1	2	3	(4	5)	4/6	5/7

Native and mixed sequences differ most conspicuously in position 3. In the native sequences, S1's ALT always occurs immediately after the COMPL. In mixed sequences, S1 acknowledges the COMPL first. Furthermore, mixed sequences differ from native ones in that there is another ACK in the last act of the sequence. Thus, mixed sequences typically show two ACKs, something which is clearly not the case in native sequences. The question now is whether these ACKs serve the same functions as was suggested above for concurring sequences, that is, those of confirming a COMPL and/or providing a topic-less passing turn.

As for concurring sequences, I have interpreted an ACK in position 3 as S1's confirmation of the COMPL, S1 being the origin of the IU. It is difficult to maintain this interpretation for non-concurring sequences, because in such sequences S1 will either reject or alter the COMPL. Disagreements preceded by an acknowledgment by the same speaker have been noticed to occur in various kinds of conversations (cf. Houtkoop-Steenstra 1980; Pomerantz 1975). In such cases, the acknowledgment is considered as a form of ritualized agreement in which (in Schiffrin's words) "the speaker displays mere awareness of the need for a display of cooperation" (1985b: 43). Such a token agreement mitigates the socially dispreferred act of rejecting. An additional interpretation, and one which is quite plausible in the context of foreign language use, is that an ACK in position 3 provides the speaker with some extra time for planning the next utterance. For this purpose, tokens of agreement, repetitions, and contentless markers (such as 'oh') are used (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1987: 87; Schiffrin 1987: 100). The ACK here becomes a mere uptake signal: it indicates that the message is received by S1. We can now reconsider S2's ACK in position 4. Whatever the actual function of S1's ACK, i.e., uptake, ritualized agreement / mitigation, or thinking pause, there is a chance that this ACK is not conclusive as regards the COMPL. S2 'knows' this and adopts a waiting attitude by uttering an ACK, which thus functions as a topic-less passing turn. S2 offers S1 a chance to correct. As Type V shows, S1 does indeed correct the COMPL in position 5. Similarly, an ACK as a topic-less passing turn on the part of S2 can occur after S1's correction, i.e., in positions 5 (in Type IV) or 7 (in Type V).

Let me once again return to S1's ACK in position 3. We have identified three functions of ACK in completion sequences. These are not alternative explanations; rather, they constitute different facets of the functional potential of ACK. As I have argued in Chapter 3, expressions in discourse can function simultaneously on various planes of the interaction; they are inherently multifunctional. It can thus be argued that, because of its expression of assent, an ACK in position 3 does three jobs at the same time: S1 acknowledges receipt of interlocutor's contribution, S1 gains time to think, and S1 mitigates an upcoming rejection.

If this threefold interpretation is correct, it explains the closing of the longest non-concurring sequence with two ACKs by S1 in positions 13 and 15 (example 15). In this completion sequence, the Dutchman (S1) repeatedly has problems finding the right words. After S1 has confirmed his agreement with the third COMPL by means of a repetition (and so does his colleague, position 14), his ACK could be interpreted by his interlocutor as a ritualized agreement. Following this, a more emphatic expression of agreement would not be out of place; S1 thus offers another acknowledgment.

5.4 Conclusions

Now that we have considered the differences between native and mixed sequences in more detail, we are able to formulate some conclusions about the structure of completion sequences and about the influence of foreign language use on their occurrence and organization.

In general, completions bear the risk of interrupting the flow of conversation. But, one could ask, if the point of business talk is progress towards some (common) goal, why should one accept acts that may inhibit this progress, or slow it down? Doesn't this mean that completion acts are more or less unnecessary, and could be avoided? Such a conclusion would not do justice to the completions' character of repair mechanisms. Like other repair mechanisms, completions are employed whenever progress in discourse meets with some kind of obstacle. As such, completion sequences function as cooperative devices for achieving mutual understanding. When people use a foreign language, the process of ensuring mutual understanding requires more communicative acts than does the corresponding language activity in monolingual settings. What my analysis has shown is that the additional acts are of a specific nature, and fulfill particular functions.

The greater length of French-Dutch as compared with Dutch-Dutch and French-French completion sequences has been accounted for by considering the sequential position and functions of extra acknowledgments that tend to occur in sequences involving non-native language use. In concurring sequences, this is the ACK in position 4 (this ACK is absent in native sequences). In non-concurring sequences, we find an ACK in position 3, and still another one as the final act of the sequence. In sum, most of the completion sequences in mixed discourse have extra acts occurring immediately before the conversation continues on the content level. I have interpreted these extra acts as topic-less passing turns. Stated differently, in native speakers' completion sequences, as opposed to mixed ones there is a strong preference for sequences without a topic-less passing turn.

One way of accounting for the topic-less passing turn is as follows: since the French-Dutch conversations are conversations with an increased potential for misunderstanding, there seems to be a perceived need to incorporate an extra chance for the interlocutor to make corrections or additions. More generally stated, the discourse structure of completion sequences typical of native non-native conversations is a result of cooperative behavior of both the native and the non-native speaker who feel a need to make sure that the interlocutor gets a

chance to say what he or she really wants to say. This discourse step is apparently not felt necessary in conversations between speakers of the same language.

It has been argued that cognitively or situationally difficult topics tend to disrupt planning and execution processes (Clark & Clark 1977: 272; Goldman-Eisler 1968). This might explain the occurrence of the other extra ACK act in mixed non-concurring completion sequences (the one in position 3). This ACK was interpreted as fulfilling three functions simultaneously: uptake, ritualized agreement / mitigation strategy, and thinking pause.

The question remains whether all completions really are repairs of word-finding problems. Here, Schiffrin's argument concerning the extension and conventionalization of pragmatic functions may be invoked. She argues that "once an expression makes cognitive [or other discoursal, J.S.] work accessible to another during the course of a conversation, it is open for pragmatic interpretation and effect and such interpretations may become conventionally associated with the markers of that work" (Schiffrin 1987: 100). Applied to the analysis of completions, this suggests the following. Completions are basically a cooperative device (see also Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs 1986); that is, they are typically used for cooperative purposes: one speaker helps another to complete his or her utterance. Sometimes this kind of help may not really be necessary; which is not to say that the entire completion is unnecessary, because in such cases, giving expression to one's *willingness* to cooperate becomes the dominant function. Thus, like other similar devices, completions can be used for a variety of functions, in addition to solving problems of finding the right words. Whatever the dominant function of the completions in a given case, the consequences for the sequential structure are the same: completions more often than not trigger additional communicative acts.

The description given here is based on a limited amount of data. It will be interesting to see how more data, also from other languages than the ones examined above, fit into this descriptive framework, and whether other variations in structure are used than the eight which I have been able to establish. It is to be expected that further analysis of a larger corpus of non-concurring sequences will show, first of all, an increase in the number of structural patterns used. In this sort of speech activity, interlocutors are especially sensitive to the social consequences of their actions; in particular, participants have at their disposal a great variety of resources to mitigate their rejection. The next chapter will examine rejection, and its expression, in more depth, by looking at the various mitigation strategies used in all forms of disagreement occurring in the data.

6 FRAMING DISAGREEMENT

This chapter deals with disagreement sequences, that is, the expression of, or commitment to, a state of affairs by one speaker and the rejection of this state of affairs by another (a 'disagreement act'). The connection of disagreement sequences to the general issue of this study, progress in discourse, lies in the assumption that a conversation proceeds well when information is exchanged between participants without any disturbances (see Chapter 3). Disagreements occur when participants' beliefs about their common ground diverge, or when participants' expectations, opinions, or goals do not concur. In order to reach the ultimate discourse goal(s), these divergences in beliefs or expectations have to be cleared up. This often requires interactional work, which disturbs the smooth flow of information exchange and calls for additional work on the interpersonal level; yet, this disruption is inevitable if the conversation is to proceed toward its main goal, namely finding solutions to substantial, rather than meta-communicative problems.

The analysis presented in the present chapter broadens the scope of non-concurring completion sequences as treated in Chapter 5. By examining all instances where one speaker disagrees with another speaker's utterance, the analysis focuses on how, and to what extent, participants mitigate disagreement acts in business talk (Section 6.2), and whether there are differences in the choice of mitigation strategies between mixed (French-Dutch) conversations, on the one hand, and native (Dutch-Dutch and French-French) conversations, on the other (Section 6.3).

The analysis of completion sequences in Chapter 5 has shown that in mixed conversations, completion sequences where a proposed completion is rejected consistently involve more communicative acts than is the case in native conversations. When non-native speakers are involved, participants consider it necessary to use additional acknowledgments before continuing the conversation on the substantive level. These additional acknowledgments occur before the disagreement act itself. The acknowledgment acts have been called 'topic-less passing turns' and interpreted as mitigations of the upcoming disagreement act; alternatively, as giving participants some extra time for thinking and for planning their next move. Although the results in Chapter 5 are based on a small sample, they make it seem likely that in mixed conversations participants opt for the use of a mitigation strategy which manifests itself in a separate act. Previous studies (e.g., Beebe & Takahashi 1989, Brown & Levinson 1978) have plausibly suggested that disagreement acts are generally mitigated. If we assume this hypothesis to be valid, the absence of token agreements in native non-concurring

sequences means that in native discourse, participants incorporate mitigation into the disagreement act. This would also mean that mixed discourse exhibits a form of explicitness (or redundancy, see Section 3.3 above) in disagreement sequences, resulting in longer sequences of acts as compared to native discourse.

As it turns out, mixed discourse does show a relatively greater number of mitigation strategies realized in separate acts. In Section 6.4, I will discuss the question of how these differences are to be interpreted. But first, I will describe the essential characteristics of disagreement sequences.

6.1 Characterization of disagreement sequences

6.1.1 Disagreement sequences defined

"The essential characteristic of any expression of disagreement is that it is a reflection, perhaps only implicitly so, of a preceding (speech) act which must have been decoded first and, above all, must have been doubted in some of its details" (Sornig 1977: 361). By performing a disagreement act, a speaker overtly signals his or her doubts about some aspect of what the other speaker has said. For instance, a speaker may reject an appeal or a claim, disclaim feelings or an intention to offend, repel a charge, dismiss a suggestion, turn down a proposal, and so on. A disagreement sequence, as I define it, is one speaker's *reaction* to another speaker's utterance. This reaction opposes, or is in disagreement with, the content of this other speaker's utterance or its implicit conditions.[1] Thus, the minimal components of a disagreement sequence are a statement by one speaker and a disagreement act by another speaker, as illustrated in example (1).

(1) FF-1:99-100

1 R: là tu baratines hein?	R: now you're talking nonsense?
[((LAUGHS))	[((LAUGHS))
2 V: [non non je baratine pas non non.	V: [no no I'm not talking nonsense no no.
((TOPIC CHANGE))	((TOPIC CHANGE))

Disagreement acts can be expressed explicitly by means of a rejection.[2] A rejection negates another speaker's statement, typically the one immediately preceding the rejection. In example (1) above, V uses two types of rejection. He uses the monomorphemic sentence *non*, and he returns R's statement with an explicit negative, *je baratine pas*.

Disagreement acts can also be performed indirectly. The speaker does not perform a rejection, but offers an alternative to, or a support of, his or her own position. An alternative is either a correction of the interlocutor's statement or a

statement of the speaker's position which goes counter to the interlocutor's position. By means of a support, a speaker provides information which underscores the credibility of his or her own position. Such acts can be explanations, justifications, or accounts. Example (2) shows how disagreement is expressed by means of an alternative. N concludes that F's proposal amounts to seven invoices (line 1). F corrects him, without an explicit negation, by saying that F's proposal (or rather F's boss' proposal) involves only one invoice (line 4).

(2) FD-1:D246-D251

1 N:	parce qu'on a heu il faut faire sept heu, sept billets sept sept invoices.	N: because we have eh we have to do seven eh, seven pieces of paper seven seven invoices.
2 F:	c'est ça oui.	F: that's right yeah.
3 N:	et alors heu.	N: and then eh.
4 F:	oui si vous /na/ disons dans dans ce qu'il demande vous n'en aurez plus qu'un quoi. ((LAUGHS))	F: yeah if you /well/ let's say in in what he ask is asking you won't have more than one right. ((LAUGHS))

6.1.2 Marking disagreement acts: Mitigation strategies

One way of improving our understanding of disagreement acts is by looking for those features which distinguish them from agreement acts.

Agreement may be implicit. Explicit agreement acts, that is, acts which indicate that the participants concur, are mostly short and simple in structure, and as a rule, immediately follow the interlocutor's statement with which the agreement is expressed. By way of contrast, disagreement acts are often structurally marked and do not follow interlocutor's doubted statement immediately (Labov & Fanshel 1977; Pomerantz 1975; Schiffrin 1987). Standard explanations of this fact are as follows. Disagreement acts are socially dispreferred; hence, they require extra interactional work in order to prevent negative consequences in the partners' relationship (Brown & Levinson 1978; Sornig 1977). Levinson has given a list of characteristics of dispreferred acts which contribute to their relative complexity.[3] He states that dispreferred acts "typically exhibit at least a substantial number of the following features" (1983: 334):

(a) The dispreferred act is *delayed* by (i) a pause before delivery of the dispreferred act; (ii) displacement of the dispreferred act over a number of turns via use of repair initiators or insertion sequences; (iii) the use of prefaces, such as discourse markers announcing a dispreferred act (e.g. "well,") token agreements, appreciations and/or apologies before delivering the dispreferred act, qualifiers

(e.g. "I don't know for sure, but ...," and hesitation in various forms including self-editing.

(b) The dispreferred act is accompanied by an *account*, that is, a carefully formulated explanation of the reason for the dispreferred act.

(c) The declination component of the dispreferred act is characteristically *indirect* and *mitigated*.[4]

In formulating a disagreement act, the speaker thus has a wide variety of expressions to select from. Goffman (1981: 230) argues that such expressions "provide a speaker with different relationships to the words he utters, providing, thus, a set of interpretive frameworks in terms of which his words can be understood." This variety of forms offers the speaker the possibility to express social meaning, such as degree of politeness or formality (Ervin-Tripp, Guo, & Lampert 1990: 310), or to characterize the status of the information, such as its degree of importance (Philips 1986: 154, 155). Following Goffman, I will call the selection of a particular expression for a communicative act the 'framing' of that act.

Disagreement acts are generally framed by features called 'mitigation strategies', because they are supposed to mitigate certain unwelcome effects which a communicative act may have on the hearer (Fraser 1980: 341).

When it comes to describing the mitigation strategies used in disagreement acts in business negotiations, Levinson's list is generally useful. I have amended it, however, for the purpose of describing and counting the mitigation features occurring in my data. These changes eliminate overlapping categories, and add some features that were not in the original list. I have subdivided the resulting eleven mitigation strategies into four groups, as follows: strategies which incorporate the mitigation into the disagreement act (group A); strategies where the mitigation is in the utterance-initial position of the disagreement act (group B); strategies where the mitigation manifests itself as a separate act (group C); and pauses between two communicative acts (group D). This division is motivated by the different degrees of delay (to use Levinson's term) they seem to bring about. As the strategies of group A are fully integrated in the disagreement act, they cause no delay prior to the disagreement act. The strategies of group B precede the disagreeing component of the communicative act, while being part of the same act. Mostly short or formulaic, the B-strategies are considered to cause less delay prior to the performance of the disagreement as compared to the strategies in group C, which are separate communicative acts. Pauses are grouped separately; even though they are not verbal acts, as represented in group C, they consume by definition relatively large amounts of time (see below for a definition of what constitutes a pause).

Further subclassification yields eleven mitigation strategies, which are defined as follows:

- (A1) the disagreement act is *modulated* by means of clause-internal expressions, such as French *peut-être* (maybe), Dutch *liever* (rather, preferably), or a modal verb.
- (A2) the disagreement act is performed with *utterance-internal* hesitation features, such as pauses and forms of self-editing.
- (A3) the disagreement act is *indirect*. That is, there is no explicit rejection which unequivocally negates the previous speaker's statement. The disagreement is expressed by an alternative or support (as explained in Chapter 5 on non-concurring completion sequences). It is also possible that the disagreement is taken up by the interlocutor after the performance of one of the mitigation strategies, such as an apology or an appreciation (strategy (C1)).
- (B1) the disagreement act is prefaced by one or more *discourse markers* announcing that a disagreement act is about to be delivered, for instance French *ben*, Dutch *nou*.[5]
- (B2) the disagreement act is modulated by an utterance-initial *qualifier*, such as French *je crois que* (I think that) or Dutch *ik weet niet zeker maar* (I'm not sure but).
- (B3) the disagreement act begins with forms of *self-editing*, like false starts and repetitions.
- (B4) the disagreement act is prefaced by a *token agreement*, typically of the form Dutch *ja, maar* (yes, but).
- (C1) an utterance expressing *appreciation* or *apology* comes before the disagreement act.
- (C2) the disagreement act is preceded by a *support* of the disagreement.
- (C3) the disagreement act is *displaced* over a number of acts by other acts than those mentioned under (C1) and (C2), for instance, acts to check the information or to acknowledge receipt of information.
- (D) a *pause of at least 0.5 seconds occurs before the delivery of the disagreement act (for my choice of the pause length of 0.5 seconds, see Chapter 2, note 6).*

Thus, in principle, a disagreement act can be framed by means of one of these eleven different mitigation strategies or a combination thereof. However, a restriction must be added here: since feature assignment (A3), indirectness, can overlap with (C1), apology or appreciation, or with (C2), support, we must take care to avoid counting the same device twice. Whenever the disagreement act is expressed indirectly (A3) by a support, an appreciation, or an apology, the act is not counted extra as a (C1) or (C2) feature.

In what follows, the features distinguished in the above list are illustrated by means of a few examples. In example (1) above, the disagreement act contains none of these features. In example (2), repeated here as (2'), five mitigation

strategies are used: indirect expression of the disagreement (F gives an alternative, without explicitly rejecting N's proposal) (A3), discourse markers *na disons* in line 4 (B1), utterance-initial self-editing *si vous* and *dans dans* in line 4 (B3), token agreement *oui* in line 4 (B4), and displacement over two acts: the utterances in lines 2 and 3 (C3).

(2') FD-1:D246-D251

1 N:	parce qu'on a heu il faut faire sept heu, sept billets sept sept invoices.	N: because we have eh we have to do seven eh, seven pieces of paper seven seven invoices.
2 F:	c'est ça oui.	F: that's right yeah.
3 N:	et alors heu.	N: and then eh.
4 F:	oui si vous /na/ disons dans dans ce qu'il demande vous n'en aurez plus qu'un quoi. ((LAUGHS))	F: yeah if you /well/ let's say in in what he ask is asking you won't have more than one right. ((LAUGHS))

The disagreement act in example (3) line 5 is framed by four mitigation features: modal verb *peux* in the disagreement act in line 5 (A1), discourse marker *ffou* in line 5 (B1), displacement of the disagreement act *si vous pouvez* in line 3 (C3) by means of an act which adds no new information, rather it elicits a reaction in the sense that D makes explicit one of the implicit conditions of his original request, and pauses of (1.2) and (0.9) (D).

(3) FD-2:B118-B128

1 N:	et si la qualité, et les restaurateurs, aussi trouvent que que que ce vin nous plaît, heu, nous voulons commencer à importer.	N: and if the quality, and the restaurateurs, also think that that that we like the wine, eh, we want to start importing.
2	(1.2)	(1.2)
3	si vous pouvez.	if you can.
4	(0.9)	(0.9)
5 C:	/ffou/ non je ne peux pas vous promettre de vin.	C: well no I cannot promise you any wine.
6	(0.5)	(0.5)
7	c'est certain.	that's for sure.
8 N:	oui [mais	N: yes [but
9 C:	[pour ceux de quatre-vingt trois.	C: [of the eighty-threes.
10 N:	[quatre-vingt trois c'est un problème.	N: [eighty-three that's a problem.

6.2 The use of mitigation strategies in business talk

6.2.1 Number of mitigation strategies used

Levinson's claim that dispreferred acts typically exhibit several mitigation strategies also seems to hold for disagreement acts in business talk. There are 65 disagreement acts in my data, resulting in 65 disagreement sequences. 55 (or 84.6%) of these are mitigated. Among those 55, 43 (or 66.2%) use more than one mitigation strategy. Disagreement acts are hardly ever framed by more than four mitigation strategies. In my data, there are only four instances (or 6.2% of all disagreement acts). Table 6.1 gives an overview of the number of mitigation strategies used per disagreement act in the three types of conversations under study.

Table 6.1: Occurrences of disagreement acts per number of mitigation strategies used. Breakdown into three types of conversations.

Type of conversation	*Number of mitigation strategies used*										
	0	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	
D-D	2	3	4	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	n = 14median = 2
F-F	6	8	8	5	2	2	0	0	0	1	n = 32 median = 2
F-D	2	1	3	5	7	1	0	0	0	0	n = 19 median = 3
Total	10	12	15	14	10	3	0	0	0	1	N = 65

From the frequent use of mitigation strategies, it can be concluded that disagreement acts in business talk are normally mitigated. However, in contrast to casual conversations, disagreement acts in business talk do not show co-occurrences of a "substantial" number of the eleven features distinguished, as Levinson argues (1983: 334) (I rely here on the common sense meaning of substantial as 'ample or considerable amount',[6] because Levinson gives no further details about what he means by 'substantial'). There are at least three possible explanations for this.

The first is that the empirical findings reported in this study are not really comparable with general observations, as there are no sufficient quantitative data available for disagreement and mitigation in casual conversation.

Another explanation assumes that business talk exhibits certain features which distinguish it from casual conversation. If the number of mitigation strategies indicates the delicacy of a disagreement act, as perceived by its performer, then it can be argued that in business talk, disagreement is not seen as

needing much precaution. In other words, business talk participants are less afraid of the possible negative effects of disagreement on the relationship with their partners. A reason for this might be that, in negotiations, it is understood beforehand that there is a certain degree of disagreement. Also business talk is considered less personal than other kinds of conversations and that, therefore, chances to hurt or offend the partner are small (cf. Lampi 1990).

The third explanation has to do with politeness requirements. In the linguistic literature, mitigation and politeness are often said to be related (Lavandera 1988: 1196, but see for a contrary view Blum-Kulka 1987, Clancy 1986). According to Fraser (1980: 344), mitigation entails politeness. The low degree of mitigation found in business talk (in particular with regard to disagreement acts) could thus indicate that politeness requirements are more relaxed in business talk than in casual conversation. This could be so, for instance, because business people give priority to the conversational maxim of clarity over that of politeness (cf. Lakoff 1973). Another possible interpretation (as I have argued elsewhere; Stalpers 1992) is that in business situations, politeness is not felt to require (highly) mitigated expressions; rather, it is expressed by other forms of talk.

6.2.2 Frequency of use of the individual mitigation strategies

The individual strategies are used each in at least four and at most 27 disagreement sequences. Table 6.2 shows the frequency of use of each mitigation strategy.

The mitigation strategy which is used most frequently is the indirect conveyance of the disagreement act (A3) with 27 occurrences; it is followed by the use of displacement acts (C3) and discourse markers (B1) with 23 and 21 occurrences, respectively. Then follow pause (D), support (C2), and modulation (A1), with 17, 15, and 14 occurrences each. The least frequently used are utterance-initial hesitation (B3), token agreement (B4) (both with eight occurrences), mid-utterance hesitation (A2), utterance-initial qualifier (B2), and appreciation or apology (C1) (with six, five, and four occurrences, respectively).

There seems to be no indication for favored, or typical use of particular combinations of strategies. The 55 mitigated disagreement acts are realized by 45 different combinations of strategies.[7]

Table 6.2: Average use of mitigation strategies per disagreement act in native and mixed settings (total numbers in parentheses).
Note: More than one strategy can be used in each disagreement act.

Mitigation strategy	*Setting* D-D	F-F	F-D	*Total*
A. Incorporated mitigation	.57 (8)	.81 (26)	.68 (13)	.72 (47)
(A1) modulation	.14 (2)	.22 (7)	.26 (5)	.22 (14)
(A2) mid-utterance hesitation	.07 (1)	.09 (3)	.11 (2)	.09 (6)
(A3) indirect conveyance	.36 (5)	.50 (16)	.32 (6)	.42 (27)
B. Utterance-initial mitigation	.50 (7)	.59 (19)	.84 (16)	.65 (42)
(B1) discourse marker(s)	.21 (3)	.28 (9)	.47 (9)	.32 (21)
(B2) utterance-initial qualifier	.07 (1)	.03 (1)	.16 (3)	.08 (5)
(B3) self-editing	.07 (1)	.19 (6)	.05 (1)	.12 (8)
(B4) token agreement	.14 (2)	.09 (3)	.16 (3)	.12 (8)
C. Act-external mitigation	.42 (6)	.50 (16)	1.05 (20)	.65 (42)
(C1) appreciation/apology	.07 (1)	.03 (1)	.11 (2)	.06 (4)
(C2) support	.07 (1)	.25 (8)	.32 (6)	.23 (15)
(C3) displacement acts	.29 (4)	.22 (7)	.63 (12)	.35 (23)
D. Pause(s) of (0.5) and above	.43 (6)	.16 (5)	.32 (6)	.26 (17)
Total	1.93 (27)	2.06 (66)	2.90 (55)	2.28(148)
Number of disagreement acts	14	32	19	65

6.3 Comparing mixed and native discourse

I now turn to possible differences in the use of mitigation strategies between native speaker conversations and mixed conversations. First, I consider the number of mitigation strategies used per disagreement act. By doing this I look at differences in the way a disagreement act is framed. Then I look at the frequency of use per category. This comparison reveals a preference for a particular type of mitigation strategies over another.

6.3.1 Number of mitigation strategies compared

With a median of three mitigation strategies per disagreement act, participants in mixed conversations tend to use more mitigation strategies per disagreement act than in either the native Dutch or the native French conversations, both with

medians of two mitigation strategies per disagreement act. The differences between the mixed setting and either of the native settings are statistically significant. The Mann-Whitney U-test yields $Z = 2.13$, $p = .03$ (two-tailed) for the native Dutch vs mixed conversations, and $Z = 2.27$, $p = .02$ (two-tailed), for the native French vs mixed conversations.

6.3.2 Individual mitigation strategies compared

A comparison of the frequency of use of the individual mitigation strategies, as presented in Table 6.2, also shows differences between native and mixed discourse. In mixed discourse, significantly more disagreement acts are framed by feature (C3) 'displacement of the disagreement act over a number of acts' than in the two native settings taken together. Chi-square is 7.42 ($df = 1$, $p < .01$). Another strategy, also showing a substantial (though not statistically significant) contrast between mixed discourse and the two native settings, is the use of discourse markers (B1). There are no features which are used significantly less in the mixed setting than in the native settings.

Some of the other features, too, show considerable (but not statistically significant) variation; however, such variation does not follow the lines of mixed vs native discourse. 'Modulation' (A1) and 'support' (C2) are used less often in native Dutch discourse than in either native French or mixed discourse. Native French discourse shows a greater use of 'indirect conveyance' (A3) and 'utterance-initial self-editing' (B3), and a lower frequency of use of 'pause' (D) than the two other settings.

6.3.3 Types of mitigation strategies compared

The expectation that in mixed discourse, mitigation strategies are more likely to be expressed in a separate act than by a strategy incorporated in a disagreement act finds some support. Within mixed discourse, the C-strategies as a group tend to have a higher occurrence rate than the A-, B-, and D-strategies; this means that the type of strategy most often used is act-external mitigation.

The use of C-strategies relative to the use of A-, B-, and D-strategies is highest in the mixed *as opposed to* the native settings. In native Dutch discourse, the four groups of strategies are used almost equally often. In contrast, native French discourse shows a predominant use of A-strategies over B-, C-, and D-strategies (see Table 6.3). The differences are, however, not statistically significant.

Table 6.3: Occurrence rate of A-, B-, C-, and D-strategies in the three types of conversations.

	D-D		F-F		F-D	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
A-strategies	29.6	(8)	39.4	(26)	23.6	(13)
B-strategies	25.9	(7)	28.8	(19)	29.1	(16)
C-strategies	22.2	(6)	24.2	(16)	36.4	(20)
D-strategy	22.2	(6)	7.6	(5)	10.9	(6)
Total		(27)		(66)		(55)

If the numbers of disagreement sequences having an A-, B-, C-, or D-strategy are compared, the differences between the mixed and native settings become more pronounced. As more than one A-, B-, or C- strategy can be used in one single disagreement sequence (that is, the total number of strategies is greater than the number of sequences), the numbers here can be lower than in Table 6.3. However, in the native Dutch setting, if an A-, B-, or C- strategy has been used, only one is used; whereas disagreement sequences in the mixed and native French settings often display more than one (see Table 6.4).

Table 6.4: Number of disagreement sequences which make use of one (or more) A-, B-, C-, and D-strategies.

	D-D		F-F		F-D	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
A-strategy	57.1	(8)	56.2	(18)	63.1	(12)
B-strategy	50	(7)	37.5	(12)	63.1	(12)
C-strategy	42.9	(6)	43.7	(14)	84.2	(16)
D-strategy	42.9	(6)	15.6	(5)	31.6	(6)
Total number of disagreement sequences		(14)		(32)		(19)

In mixed discourse, 84.2 % of all disagreement sequences make use of one or more C-strategies, whereas in native Dutch, the percentage is only 42.9%, and in native French 43.9 %. Here, the differences are statistically significant. Chi-square is 9.0 ($df = 1$, $p < .01$) for the mixed vs native settings.

The differences with regard to the other strategies (A, B, and D) show no statistical significance, neither when we compare the native vs mixed settings, nor when we compare one native setting with the other two settings. The difference in use of B-strategies between native French and mixed discourse

shows an important trend, with mixed discourse having a higher occurrence rate than native French discourse.

The fact that the more frequent use of C-strategies in the mixed dialogues is not compensated by a decrease in A-, B-, and D-strategies suggests that this is not a difference in the kind of strategies preferred. There seems to be a genuinely higher need for mitigation in the mixed situation (see Section 6.3.1, above).

6.3.4 Amount of pauses compared (D-strategy)

On the whole, mixed discourse is characterized by a greater amount of pauses (see Section 2.4), but in the disagreement sequences, a conspicuous finding is that mixed discourse does not show a higher frequency of occurrence of silent pauses than either native Dutch or French discourse (the difference with the latter group is more pronounced, but still not statistically significant), see Table 6.2. Moreover, filled pauses (for this term, see Chapter 2, note 6) in mixed discourse, as represented by features (A2) and (B3), either show little difference in use (in the case of mid-utterance hesitation, (A2)) or even are less frequent (in the case of utterance-initial self-editing, (B3)), compared to the two native settings. If the amount of pausing can be considered as an indicator of the cognitive and/or linguistic difficulty of the current speech activity (see Chapter 2 page 15 above), my results suggest that disagreement poses no extra difficulties in the mixed setting, unlike, for instance, topic change (where pauses score relatively high in mixed discourse, see Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 above). Some authors do claim that disagreeing is easier than other speech acts, such as asking for new information (Sornig 1977: 362). Processing difficulties cannot explain, however, why native Dutch discourse exhibits a more frequent use of pauses than the other two settings. Chi-square analysis on the use of pauses shows statistically significant difference between native Dutch and native French (chi-square= 3.97; df = 1, $p < .05$). To explain this, it is necessary to consider pauses as strategies operating on the interpersonal level: for instance, with the aim of framing the disagreement act as a socially dispreferred act.

I will now take a closer look at the acts used to displace the disagreement. This is strategy (C3), the only strategy which is significantly more frequently used in mixed than in native discourse. In this analysis, both the native and the mixed occurrences (altogether totaling 23 occurrences) are taken into account.

6.4 The function of displacement acts in disagreement sequences

Generally speaking, the acts occurring between the statement and the disagreement act are short and do not contribute any new or substantial information. In the following, I will demonstrate that there are two rationales for the occurrence of these 'topic-less' displacement acts in disagreement sequences: (a) the acts are a result of a waiting attitude, used by the disagreer in order to avoid the socially dispreferred act of disagreeing, or (b) the disagreer did not anticipate a controversial act and needed time to readjust his or her contribution. Five types of sequences resulting from the use of displacement acts can be distinguished. (Note that other strategies can, and actually do, co-occur with the displacement acts in these examples.)

The first type of sequence caused by displacement acts (seven occurrences) is the embedded question-answer insertion sequence (Merritt 1976) which typically results in a four-act sequence as illustrated in example (4) (henceforth, S1 denotes the speaker whose statement is challenged, S2 is the speaker who disagrees with S1)

(4)

1 S1: statement
2 S2: question for additional information
3 S1: answer
4 S2: disagreement

Both native and mixed conversations make use of this strategy to ask for additional information before reacting to the statement. Questions can concern general problems of uptake, as exemplified in (5), or are used to check the information given by the interlocutor (example (6)).

(5) FF-T11:B82

1 A: ((LAUGHING - INAUDIBLE UTTERANCE))	A: ((LAUGHING - INAUDIBLE UTTERANCE))
2 G: comment?	G: what did you say?
3 A: ((LAUGHING)) vous devriez peut-être pas envoyer à Paris des fois qu'ils aient changé d'avis.	A: ((LAUGHING)) maybe you shouldn't send to Paris in case that they have changed their mind.
4 G: non je vais vous dire pourquoi.	G: no I will tell you why.

(6) FD-T11:208

1	N:	à quatre-vingt, huit francs.	N: at eighty, eight francs.
2	F:	oui.	F: yes.
3		(1.5)	(1.5)
4	N:	CAF* Verdun.	N: CIF* Verdun.
5	F:	ah CAF Verdun?	F: oh CIF Verdun?
6	N:	ja. ((DUTCH))	N: ja. ((DUTCH))
7	F:	ah non c'était pas CAF hein?	F: oh non it wasn't CIF right?
8		(1.4)	(1.4)

*CAF = Coût, Assurance, Frêt. The English abbreviation is CIF = Cost, Insurance, Freight.

In checking whether the information is correctly understood, S2 verifies whether his doubts (and thus, a possible disagreement) are legitimate. The insertion-question gives S2 the opportunity to avoid the dispreferred action, if his doubts turn out to be unfounded. Moreover, as Goffman (1981: 212) has argued, in the case of embedded question-answer insertion sequences, the information-check question by the disagreer can be interpreted as a message to S1 that something is wrong, in the sense that there is no common ground between them (see also Weinrich (1982: 679) on the function of questions in general). By voicing a question, the disagreer indicates a possible discord, without strictly disagreeing. If S1 fails to come up with a correction, then S2's next step is to utter a disagreement.

The second type of sequence (three occurrences) is characterized by the absence of an immediate (substantial) reaction to S1's statement by S2. S1 then elicits a reaction by S2. In other words, after a pause (strategy (D)) or an acknowledgment by S2, S1 reformulates part of the statement or its presuppositions. Then, after another pause, S2 comes up with his disagreement. For instance, in example (7), N brings up the possibility of obtaining exclusive rights under particular conditions (line 1). After a pause of (1.3), he reformulates these conditions (line 4). After another pause of (1.0), the French interlocutor dismisses N's suggestion by rejecting the possible fulfillment of N's proposed conditions (line 6). (Example (3) above is a case where S1 elicits a reaction by making explicit one of the presuppositions in line 3.)

(7) FD-2:B165

1	N:	moi si je commence avec quelqu'un je demande jamais un [!] exclusivité.,	N: if I start dealing with someone I never request exclusive rights.,

2	je peux, je trouve que je peux seulement faire ça si heu si j'arrive à des chiffres.	I can, I think that I can only do that if eh if I arrive at large amounts.
3	(1.3)	(1.3)
4	si je fais des quantités.	if I am dealing with big quantities.
5	(1.0)	(1.0)
6 C:	ben premièrement je ne veux pas faire de quantités.	C: but I don't want to deal with large quantities in the first place.

The third type of sequence (four occurrences) is similar to the previous one, but here the absence of a (substantial) reaction from S2 to S1's statement is taken as an agreement by S1. That is, S1's statement is followed by a pause or an acknowledgment by S2, upon which S1 continues to add new information. S2 interrupts S1 and voices disagreement. Example (8) presents a case where G wants to continue (line 3), but is interrupted by L (line 4), who rejects G's statement in line 1.

(8) FF-T12:47

1 G:	bon ils vont probablement matraquer les prix.	G: O.K. they will probably slash the prices.
2	(0.8)	(0.8)
3	bon.	OK.
4 L:	pas forcément hein Monsieur Goglin.	L: not necessarily so Mr. Goglin.

In the following example (9), F adopts an attitude of waiting by acknowledging N's statement (line 2). N starts the next contribution (line 3), but is interrupted by F (line 4).

(9) FD-1:D245

1 N:	parce qu'on a heu il faut faire sept heu, sept billets sept sept invoices.	N: because you have eh we have to make seven eh, seven pieces of paper seven seven invoices.
2 F:	c'est ça oui.	F: that's right yes.
3 N:	et alors heu	N: and then eh
4 F:	oui si vous /na/ disons dans dans ce qu'il demande vous n'en aurez plus qu'un quoi.	F: yes if you /na/ let's say in in what he asks you won't have more than one, right.

In the fourth type of sequence (three occurrences), S2 acknowledges S1's statement. This acknowledgment is followed by a long pause (and possibly other delay strategies), after which S2 comes up with a rejection. In example (10) below,

lines 1 and 3, F proposes to pay a single bill in six installments without paying any additional interest. N acknowledges F's proposal, and a long pause (of 1.2 seconds) follows. Then N shows his good will by means of two appreciative remarks (strategy C2) in lines 6 and 8, before indirectly rejecting F's proposal, namely by explaining why the proposal is not acceptable (line 9).

(10) FD-1:D198

1	F:	donc on vous envoie un seul bon de commande.	F: thus we send you one single order letter.
2		(0.8)	(0.8)
3		mais heu (0.5) disons que le le paiement (0.5) serait échelonné sur six mois.	but, eh (0.5) let's say that the the payment (0.5) would come step by step over six months.
4	N:	oui oui.	N: yes yes.
5		(1.2)	(1.2)
6		O.K. je suis ici pour coopérer avec [vous hein.	O.K. I am here to cooperate with [you right.
7	F:	[((LAUGHS))	F: [((LAUGHS))
8	N:	alors heu ((LAUGHS)) pour moi c'est important d'avoir des des des un clientèle satisfait hein.	N: thus eh ((LAUGHS)) for me it's important to have a a a satisfied clients right.
9		mais, heu de l'autre côté heu il aussi BOUHUYS faut gagner un peu de l'argent pour heu pour pour heu se permettre un personnage comme moi.	but, eh on the other hand eh it also BOUHUYS has to earn a little money in eh in in eh order to can allow a person like me.

In cases such as (10), S2 eventually comes up with a disagreement when S1 fails to react.

As examples (5) through (10) show, the disagreer does not come forward with his or her disagreement immediately. Instead, he or she asks a question, gives an acknowledgment, or keeps silent. By taking this stance, the disagreer, S2, provides S1 with an opportunity to correct him- or herself. S2 behaves, as it were, in a manner that allows S1 the possibility of self-correction by implicitly granting that S1 might have made a mistake. From research on fault-corrections, it is known that self-correction is preferred over other-corrections (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977). In accordance with this, the disagreer offers the interlocutor the opportunity for self-correction, before he or she expresses disagreement. If there is no sign of self-correction on the part of S1 (e.g., when S1 wants to continue informative talk, elicits a reaction by S2, or keeps silent), S2 finally produces a disagreement act.

As I suggested above, there is, in addition to mitigation, another possible rationale for using delay strategies in disagreement acts (of which the displace-

ment strategy is one). Delay mechanisms give the hearer more time to process the utterance and to formulate an appropriate reaction. Disagreements are problematic statements, which are cognitively more difficult and therefore, take longer to process mentally, as some have argued, (cf. Clark & Clark 1977: 272, but see the reference to Sornig 1977 on the relative easiness of disagreement acts, page 94 above). Alternatively, as others have suggested (e.g. Levinson 1983: 306-307), disagreements deviate from conversational expectations. An illustration is found in the last type of sequences consisting of six cases of self-correction: the speaker who disagrees corrects himself, that is, the speaker first agrees (or continues with adding new information) but subsequently disagrees. Before the disagreement act, the disagreer shows signs of self-correction in the form of hesitation, or discourse markers foreshadowing a correction.

The pattern for self-correction in native conversations takes at least three acts:

(11)

1 S1: statement
2 S2: agreement or continuation
3 S2: disagreement

In mixed conversations, the self-correction sequence takes minimally four acts:

(12)

1 S1: statement
2 S2: agreement
3 S1: acknowledgment
4 S2: disagreement

Compare also examples (13) and (14), taken from a native and a mixed conversation, respectively. In (13), R first agrees (line 2) and then uses a discourse marker foreshadowing a correction, *enfin*, and indirectly rejects V's proposal with a support (line 3).

(13) FF-1:C60

1 V:	et je te fais deux livraisons. une livraison pour la rentrée et une livraison pour la fin d'année.,	V: and I'll make two deliveries. one delivery at the beginning of the school year and one at the end of the year.,
2 R:	ouais d'accord.	R: yeah alright.
3	enfin la fin d'année heu c'est peut-être tard hein?	well the end of the year eh that's maybe late right?
4	fin octobre c'est meilleur.	end of October is better.
5 V:	heu sept novembre?,	V: eh November seven?,

6 R:	ouais d'accord sept novembre ouais.	R: yeah alright November seven yeah.

By contrast, in example (14), N first agrees and then starts hesitating *heu heu heu* (line 3). The hesitation overlaps with F's acknowledgment (line 4), whereupon N performs his disagreement act.

(14) FD-3:38

1 F:	qui est une formule qui contient (0.7) quatre-vingts grammes (0.5) kilo (0.6) d'oxyde tetracycline.	F: which is a formula containing (0.7) eighty grams (0.5) per kilo (0.6) of tetracycline oxide.
2	(1.1)	(1.1)
3 N:	voilà heu [heu heu	N: here you are eh [eh eh
4 F:	[c'est ça.	F: [that's it.
5 N:	non non heu,	N: no no eh,
6 F:	[quatre-vingts grammes.	F: [eighty grams.
7 N:	[c'est de huit, heum huit pour cent heu.	N: [that's eight, ehm eight percent eh.
8 F:	quatre-vingts grammes au kilo.,	F: eighty grams per kilo.,
9	oui, huit pour cent.	yes, eight percent.
10 N:	huit pour cent oui.	N: eight percent yes.
11	(0.7)	(0.7)
12 F:	donc c'est une des choses que nous allons entreprendre heu (0.8) très prochainement.	F: so this is one of the things we are going to undertake eh (0.8) very soon.

This observation is in line with what we found for completion sequences in Chapter 5. Like repair sequences in the form of completion sequences, self-corrections are typically longer in mixed conversations because of the insertion of an additional acknowledgment act.

Interestingly, S2's initial agreement in examples (13) and (14) shows that he evidently anticipates an unproblematic statement, not a problematic one. In other words, S2 does not expect any obstacle at the point of his acknowledgment. This finding confirms Schank and Burstein's observation that goal failures and plan violations are points of deviation from expectations (and that such situations usually occasion strong affective responses) (1985: 153). The delay caused by displacement acts (among other strategies) gives the disagreer time to adjust his or her expectations to the new development. In addition, the unexpected turn in the discourse may provoke emotions, which, in turn, may increase the time needed to plan and execute speech (Clark & Clark 1977: 272). In this way, too, displacement acts may result in delays.

Other sequences also provide evidence for the unexpectedness of (some of the) disagreement acts. For instance in example (15), J (line 5) continues after A's

disagreement act (line 3). J then interrupts his own utterance in order to react to the disagreement with a question, *wat?* (what?) (line 5), whereupon A reformulates his disagreement act (line 6). This suggests that J wasn't mentally prepared for A's failure to go along with his proposal.

(15) DD-T10:IV:62
J, the buyer, and A, the seller, are discussing a job J had to carry out for A, namely the installation of a hydraulic shovel (a 'white polyp') on a truck.

1	J:	ja vier april heb je gezegd.	J: yeah April the fourth you said.
2		dat [is lekker.	that [is quite something.
3	A:	[nee nee ik niet.	A: [no no not me.
4		(1.3)	(1.3)
5	J:	week, wat?, [kijk	J: week, what?, [look.
6	A:	[ik heb bij jou geen witte poliep besteld.,	A: [I didn't order a white polyp with you.,
7		dat heeft Peter Schoofs gedaan.	Peter Schoofs did that.

6.5 Conclusions

Disagreements occur when the common ground between participants is eroding, or when participants' goals do not concur. It is important that disagreements be resolved, in one way or another, so that the conversation can proceed towards accomplishing its ultimate goals. The performance of disagreement acts exhibits discernible structural patterns, which can be described as mitigation strategies. Most disagreement acts in business negotiations (as in other conversations) are mitigated. However, the present analysis suggests a reduced need for mitigating disagreement acts in business talk, as compared to casual conversation. If this analysis is correct, it makes explicit an eminently illustrative feature of the common sense notion of 'business-like talk'.

Of the eleven mitigation strategies distinguished, one strategy is used significantly more often in mixed than in native conversations; viz., the insertion of acts between the statement of the first speaker and the disagreement act of the second speaker. This strategy is not exclusively used in mixed conversation, but it is significantly more frequent than in native settings. Interestingly, the resulting sequences are similar to the typical pattern found for completion sequences in mixed conversations, namely, the insertion of contentless acts leaving the interlocutor conversational room to add to the previous act(s). In disagreement sequences, the additional acts are given two interpretations. The first refers to the interpersonal level, in that the first speaker is given a chance for self-correction

in order to avoid a socially dispreferred disagreement act. Under this interpretation, the delay is created by the second speaker. The other interpretation relates to the cognitive level: a controversial statement being unexpected, requires more processing time, and hence results in a delay. As in all communicative behavior, one functional force does not exclude another from being at work. Whatever the cause for the delay, in mixed discourse, disagreement sequences result more often in longer sequences of acts than in either native Dutch or native French discourse.

7 CONCLUSION: THE MERITS AND RISKS OF PROTRACTED SEQUENCES

Three kinds of discourse sequences have been analyzed in this study: topic change, completion, and disagreement. Their common feature is that the participants are primarily concerned with meta-communicative tasks, rather than with the substance of the content level. The sequences represent conversational problems for which participants have to find a solution in order to continue on the content level. Describing these sequences allows us to see how participants organize their contributions in order to proceed from one point of information transfer to another; in other words, to make progress in discourse, as defined in this study.

In order to let a conversation progress properly, a certain amount of work needs to be done, among other things, in order to reduce noise and to establish and maintain a good relationship. At the outset of this study, I hypothesized that in interlingual business talk, the work needed for accomplishing these tasks would increase, because the potential for noise is larger there than in monolingual settings. In order to determine whether this expectation was supported by real-life situations, I focused each of my three analyses on the following three questions:

- What kinds of acts do participants use when carrying out a topic change, completion, or disagreement sequence?
- Are there any differences between native and mixed conversations in this respect?
- If yes, and if (as it turned out to be the case) the sequences in mixed conversations are longer than those in native conversations, how can such protracted sequences be accounted for?

The first question aimed at discovering the discourse characteristics of business talk, whereas the other two focused on the influence of foreign language use on discourse. By way of conclusion, let me reassess the questions in the given order.

7.1 Kinds of acts involved

As regards discourse structure in general, the topic change sequences show that business talk is characterized by clearly marked topic transitions with regard to both closing the current topic and opening a new one. I have argued that, on the one hand, the relatively large number of marked transitions in business talk

reflects the way topics are organized in this kind of setting: topics do not emerge spontaneously from previous topics, because the participants come to a meeting with an agenda of items, all of which they want to have treated. On the other hand, a clear marking of topic boundaries can be seen as a strategy of avoiding the process of interactionally establishing a topic change, and thus proceeding, in a rather efficient way, to the next topic. At the same time, the fact that topic boundary markers are 'topic-less', that is, carry no new information, provides interlocutors the conversational room necessary to prevent a premature closing and to ratify the transition to the next topic. This interpretation is corroborated by the way topic conflicts come to a solution.

The structure of completion sequences found in business talk is similar to that described for completion sequences in other types of discourse (cf. Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs 1986). In addition, disagreement sequences in business talk are characterized by the same kind of mitigation strategies as found in other kinds of conversations, with the exception that the occurrence rate of these strategies seem to be somewhat lower in the business setting (cf. Levinson 1983: 334). This could indicate that disagreement is less dispreferred, socially, in business talk than in other kinds of discourse. The strategies used for delaying an upcoming disagreement act have been interpreted as efforts at creating conversational room for self-correction, thus avoiding the socially dispreferred disagreement. To answer the question whether the so-called 'mitigation strategies' do the same job as they supposedly do in casual conversations, namely coding politeness considerations, further empirical research is needed; in particular, one must find out which linguistic forms are associated with politeness in business talk.

7.2 Coping with a foreign language

The analysis of completion sequences and disagreement sequences supports my hypothesis that in mixed discourse, longer sequences of acts are needed for performing a particular task than in native settings. By contrast, topic changes do not show any difference between mixed and native discourse in this respect. Since the acts responsible for the protracted sequences in completion and disagreement sequences are topic-less, the explanation proposed for the occurrence of these acts concords with that offered for topic changes mentioned above, namely that they open up conversational room for adding information, or in the case of disagreement sequences, for prompting a self-correction.

Topic changes, on the contrary, do not show protracted sequences in mixed discourse. I see two possible reasons that can account for this finding. Firstly, as the organization of topics happens on a more global level than do completion

and disagreement (the latter two being embedded in a topic unit), my analysis suggests that, as regards the sequencing of acts, the use of a foreign language has no influence on higher level organization. Secondly, the dissimilarity in question may be caused by the difference in nature of topic changes (as opposed to completion and disagreement). Even though all three sequence types have been characterized as meta-communicative, only completions and disagreement acts are reactive acts, that is, they react to the propositional contents of what was said by a previous speaker. By contrast, a topic change is characterized by the development of a new initiative, whose ground has to be established. This could mean that repairs (in a broad sense), such as completions and disagreements, require more effort in an interlanguage than in a monolingual setting.

7.3 The rationale for protracted sequences

There are good reasons for sequences in mixed discourse being longer than the comparable sequences in monolingual settings. First of all, these longer sequences afford the speakers more time to plan and execute their contributions. This additional time is needed both for processing incoming information and for coping with the additional difficulty of phrasing one's utterance in a foreign language. Common ground must be established time and again, a need which is more acutely felt in this sort of setting. Secondly, from a linguistic point of view, topic-less passing turns are relatively easy to enact. Therefore, they seem to be a convenient means of 'buying time', the time that is needed by speakers engaged in conversation in a language in which they are not fluent. Thirdly, since topic-less passing turns create openings for accepting or rejecting the proposed course of conversation, or for making self-corrections, such turns can be used to avoid potentially offensive situations. Hence, the additional effort observed in completion and disagreement sequences in mixed settings can be attributed to requirements on two different levels of discourse: that of cognitive planning and processing, and that of interpersonal rapport.

The increased use of mitigations and topic-less passing turns, as observed in completion and disagreement sequences in mixed discourse, carries certain risks. Usually, such expressions are not noticed consciously, except when they surpass what has been called the limit of "production tolerance" (Goffman 1981) for such expressions in a particular setting. For monological radio talk, Goffman has argued that there is a production tolerance for 'remedial expressions' (i.e., expressions used to repair a fault). What he means by this is that a speaker can only use a certain amount of remedial expressions before risking that the audience shift their attention away from the topic and towards these expressions. Both the

non-occurrence of such expressions and a too frequent use of them can "strike the hearer as improper" (Goffman 1981: 231). My concern here is with the latter. By using more remedial and preventive strategies than is considered standard in business talk, that is, than would go unnoticed, a speaker forces his or her interlocutor to filter out this extra material, which lacks substantial content. In this way, topic-less passing turns and mitigating expressions become counterproductive in that they add to the interlocutor's work, making it more difficult to follow the speaker's argument, despite the fact that they are originally intended to make the conversation proceed more smoothly. Thus, exceeding the production tolerance for such expressions can have undesirable consequences. Rather than helping to overcome noise, excessive use of topic-less passing turns, mitigations, etc. causes 'linguistic noise', that is, communicative disturbances in the absence of any apparent communicative failure. Each individual occurrence may be minor by itself, but by accumulating too much linguistic noise through repeated occurrences, one runs the risk of exhausting the interlocutor's capacity to deal with this noise in passing (Goffman 1981: 184, 231). This may very well be one of the reasons for the fatigue and irritation mentioned by business people as characteristic of international negotiations.

In sum, the influence of the use of a foreign language on discourse structure should be seen against the back drop of a larger risk of being misunderstood. To avoid, or minimize, this risk, interlocutors build in to their conversation a number of 'buffers', such as mitigation devices etc. Creating these buffers represents a strategy which can be attributed to both native and non-native speakers. In itself, this strategy requires an effort from the interlocutors. Moreover, its use bears the risk of creating linguistic by-products which need to be filtered out; this, in turn, is again a process that demands effort. That more energy is consumed in international business talk can thus be explained, on the conversational level, by the assumption that, if more time and effort were not spent at certain strategic points, misunderstandings and/or frictions would occur. As a consequence, even larger amounts of time and effort would be needed to do repair work and overcome these problems. The behavior manifested in topic-less passing turns as described in this study, is in general agreement with Zipf's Principle of Least Effort, which is said to govern "every individual's entire behavior" (Zipf 1949: 6): individuals are inclined to invest work in order to save work.

7.4 Closing remarks

The focus of this study has been on foreign language use and adaptive behavior of both native and non-native speakers in business talk. It was necessary to

ignore many of the factors which may have an impact on progress in discourse, such as the proficiency level of the non-fluent speaker, or the business relationship between the partners. Factors such as these were impossible to control or to compare. Also, in measuring the observed sequences, many potentially influential factors had to be ignored, because no theoretical framework existed for dealing with them. For instance, in the analysis of topic change, no consideration has been given to the 'distance' between two topics and the 'types' (money, technical information, etc.) of topics involved. Similarly, in disagreement sequences, I have neglected the causes of the disagreement, and no distinction has been made between the 'weight' of the different strategies: whether they differ in the amount of mitigation and thus are more prone to occur without any other mitigations. Despite these necessary restrictions on my work, one positive feature of my study deserves to be mentioned, viz., that it is based on real-life tape recordings of actual negotiations, in which the participants were engaged with all the legal and commercial consequences involved in regular business negotiations. Furthermore, focusing our attention on the problems that arise when a foreign language is used, can be useful for increasing our understanding of the dynamics of business talk in general, since also among native speakers, too, there can be misunderstandings for which the linguist must seek explanations in terms of language use. The study of exceptional situations, such as the use of a foreign language, just like the study of other situations where certain handicaps are involved, gives access to procedures which are also at work in normal discourse, but which under normal conditions, maybe, are more difficult to grasp. The detailed analysis of discourse sequences offered in this study reveals some of the systematicity with which participants go about constructing discourse; it also provides an opportunity of going beyond mere face-value interpretations of certain phenomena, such as hesitation. More research along these lines will have to be done, especially such as is directed towards practical applications. Its results could make business people more sensitive to the situation in which they function: what kind of problems may occur, what solutions can be found, why and how communicating in an international context differs from communicating in a domestic context, how these differences affect the participants in international communication, how training programs can be devised for facilitating intercultural encounters, and so on.

'Intercultural' and 'cross-linguistic communication' are present-day catchwords, both in the business world and in the domain of the applied social sciences. Data-based research on what is actually happening in such situations, however, is still scarce. It is hoped that this study will be an incentive for others to carry on where I had to stop.

Notes

Notes to Chapter 1

1. E.g., Cicourel (1982), Clark and Schaefer (1989a, b), Clark and Wilkes-Gibbs (1986), Grimshaw (1987a), Houtkoop-Steenstra (1987), Jefferson (1979, 1983a, 1984a), Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), Schegloff (1982), Schegloff and Sacks (1974), Schiffrin (1987), and many others.

2. In contrast to other kinds of cross-cultural encounters, participants in business talk cannot make use of certain communication strategies which are said to be typical of, or useful for, cross-cultural encounters, because economical considerations have preference over linguistic ones. Two such strategies are (1) to avoid, or to stop talking about (linguistically) difficult topics (Tarone & Yule 1987: 55), and (2) to avoid or to interrupt the entire communication when difficulties arise (Roche 1986: 15). Evidently, the use of such strategies in business interactions can have undesirable commercial consequences.

3. Cross-cultural research mostly concerns settings in the foreign language classroom (e.g. Trosborg 1987), with immigrant workers (e.g. Bremer, Broeder, Roberts, Simonot, and Vasseur 1988; Gumperz 1982b), or instructional dialogues (e.g. Bonamy and Waters 1984).

4. A recent study (Koster 1991) shows a decreasing knowledge of foreign languages (with the exception of English) among Dutch business people. The result is that business contacts with French-speaking and Spanish-speaking countries are often avoided.

5. Cross-cultural studies on management and negotiation behavior suggest that differences exist between geographically close cultures (Porat 1970), and in particular between the Dutch and French business communities (Hofstede 1980). Such differences might very well be revealed in the discourse structure of business negotiation.

6. The term 'mitigation' is used here as defined by Fraser (1980). I will come back to this notion in Chapter 6.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. In how far this view is culturally biased is not clear. Graham's study (1984) about differences in negotiation behavior between American and Japanese business people suggests that the amount of information exchange plays a greater role in American than in Japanese negotiations.

2. Some authors also use the term 'negotiation' for everyday conversations (e.g. Karrass 1970, Vrolijk & Timmerman 1980). Most authors, however, restrict themselves to institutional settings.

3. Apparently, cultural differences exist in the individuals' sensitivity to being recorded. See Tsuda (1984: 15) on the difficulties she experienced in getting permission to tape sales talk in the USA, in contrast to the ease of getting permission in Japan.

4. Because of the intensive empirical work involved in discourse analysis, analyses are often based on relatively little material. Labov and Fanshell (1977) use one conversation of 25 minutes; Bonamy and Waters (1984) one conversation; Freed (1981) 250 utterances; Snow et al. (1981) 28 conversations totalling 3400 utterances; Houtkoop-Steenstra (1987) 8 hours; Tsuda (1984) 329 events. Some authors fail to mention the amount of data used, e.g. Schiffrin (1987).

5. The digits in the code indicate the order in which I received the recording: '1' is the first recording, etc. A 'T' preceding a conversation's code number indicates that it is a telephone recording.

6. 'Silent pauses' contrast with 'filled pauses'. A 'silent pause' is an interval without speech, whereas a 'filled pause' is described as a gap filled by 'eh', 'er', 'uh', 'mm', and other hesitation markers (Clark & Clark 1977: 262). Noteworthy is Goldman-Eisler's observation (1968) that in interviews and monologues, speed of talking is almost entirely determined by the amount of pausing, where there is great variation in individuals' preference for silent or filled pauses. The pause analysis offered here represents but a partial picture of pausing behavior in business talk, as it only takes into account silent, not filled pauses, as it is sometimes difficult to make a distinction between filled pauses and so-called 'discourse markers', that is, markers which bracket units of talk and which give hints about discourse content (Schiffrin 1987, Chapter 2).

7. The division into groups with an interval of (0.4) seconds is inspired by my own measurements and Jefferson's study on pauses (1983b). In measuring short pauses, I felt uncertain about the length of very short pauses, which I, therefore, grouped into one category of (0.4) and below. Jefferson argues that the (0.9)-(1.2) range constitutes the "standard maximum" pause length in (American English) spontaneous speech; longer pauses are far less frequent. To some extent, the categorization of pauses is arbitrary. Brown and Yule (1983: 162), for instance, propose a rougher division for their data: (0.6) seconds and below, from (0.7)-(1.9) seconds, and (2.0) and above.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. Authors also refer to 'referential' information (Jones 1977; Labov 1975), 'factual' information (Brown & Yule 1983; Lakoff 1973), or 'ideational' information (Halliday 1978; Schiffrin 1987). Kasher (1985: 242) points out the impossibility of defining what information actually is, and, therefore, favors an approach that avoids this notion.

2. The term 'grounding' is used here in a different sense than that of e.g., Foley and Van Valin (1984), and Hopper and Thompson (1984), who consider grounding as a psychological strategy of presenting information: the main points in discourse are 'foregrounded', and information that serves to assist, amplify, or comment on the main point is 'backgrounded'.

3. Different kinds of repair sequences have been described in the literature, such as sub-sequences (Weijdema, Dik, Oehlen, Dubber & De Blauw 1982), side-sequences (Jefferson 1972), and calls for replay (Merritt 1976).

4. This process is mostly referred to as 'negotiation of meaning'. The negotiation metaphor is widely used in discourse analysis (cf. Leech 1983: 232; Yngve 1986: 79; for a critical review of its use, cf. Dieckmann & Paul 1983). Since I am using the term 'negotiation' for a particular way of dealing with problems in institutional settings (see Chapter 2), I avoid using the verb 'to negotiate' in a metaphorical sense. Instead, I will use expressions such as 'interactionally define', 'interactionally establish', or 'interactionally achieve'.

5. Grice proposes the following four maxims: (1) Maxim of Quantity: do not give more or less information than is required; (2) Maxim of Quality: give genuine and not spurious information; (3) Maxim of Relevance: give the information appropriate to immediate need; (4) Maxim of Manner: convey the information clear and with reasonable dispatch.

6. Other researchers, too, have proposed to replace or revise Grice's cooperative principle. I will not dwell on their suggestions in depth. For instance, R. Lakoff (1973) in her "logic of politeness" incorporates politeness considerations into the cooperative principle in order to account for pragmatic aspects of language. Sperber and Wilson (1986) distill Grice's maxims into a single, supposedly sufficient one, that of relevance. By doing so, they account only for cognitive aspects of communication and disregard all social aspects, as Mey and Talbot (1989) have argued.

7. It has been suggested that a theory which uses a principle of rationality as its basis is culturally biased, reflecting Western values (cf. Ryan 1978: 76). Be this as it may, the context of business negotiations is typically associated with rational values, and, most of all, all the speakers in this study belong to that "biased" society. Moreover, economic theories make use of the principle of rationality, too (cf. Pettit 1978: 60; Van den Bergh 1985: Chapter 2 on negotiation literature).

8. Various hierarchical models in terms of goals have been developed, e.g. Grosz and Sidner (1986), Kasher (1985), Parisi and Castelfranchi (1981), Schank and Burstein (1985).

9. See, for instance, Dupont, who argues that the ultimate factor governing behavior in negotiations is 'face': "la négociation reconnaît au minimum le devoir de 'sauver la face'" (1982: 21).

10. Fraser's Principle of Efficiency says: "Given nothing to suggest the contrary, whenever a further utterance would be redundant one can infer that the speaker need not make the utterance but that he will operate as if he had made it and will expect the hearer to operate similarly" (1975: 195). Leech's Economy Principle prescribes that "if one can shorten the text while keeping the message unimpaired, this reduces the amount of time and effort involved both in encoding and in decoding" (1983: 67). Note that Leech also relates an increase in the expenditure of linguistic material to an increase in time.

11. The term 'communicative act' is frequently used in linguistic literature to acknowledge the multifunctional character of linguistic utterances; individual uses differ in scope (cf., Allwood 1976: Chapter 14, Brown & Yule 1983: 6, Goodman 1984: 146, Kreckel 1981).

Notes to Chapter 4

1. The definition strictly excludes the opening of the first topic and the closing of the last topic in a conversation, as these are not instances of topic *change*.

2. There are a few instances in the data where a discourse topic is introduced 'baldly', one of the participants mentioning the issue. The interlocutor can take up the discourse topic immediately after the presentation of the issue.

3. This instance occurred in a mixed conversation. Notice that the small talk is about problems of learning French in Dutch schools (which is not a problem the two interlocutors have to solve). It is very likely that this issue is topicalized after a clarifying remark in English by the Frenchman, and as a result of the Dutchman's consciousness of the recording situation.

4. The use of meta-linguistic expressions for establishing topic changes has been described for several discourse genres, e.g., radio interviews (Gülich 1970), informal discussions (Pander Maat 1988: 54), face to face interviews (Schiffrin 1980), classroom interaction (Scholtens & Stalpers 1982), and TV panel discussions (Weijdema 1985). In these studies, meta-linguistic expressions are considered to be signals explicitly indicating topic changes. As far as quantitative results are available, meta-linguistic expressions are said to be used little or rarely (see also Gumperz, Aulakh & Kaltman 1982: 56).

5. The term 'topic conflict' does not imply that the participants are in conflict. I use the term to indicate that one topic is developed while another is shelved or abandoned.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. In the literature on negotiation, one finds suggestions to the effect that this feature should be taken into consideration when engaging in negotiations. Thus, Mastenbroek (1982: 143) considers the presence of colleagues to be one of the four dilemmas characterizing negotiation.

2. In this example, there is another IU (in N's ACK). This IU does not trigger a COMPL from the interlocutor and is, therefore, disregarded here.

3. The function of Dutch 'nou' is similar to that of 'well' in English: it is a discourse marker which creates coherence, whenever coherence expectations are temporarily upset. 'Nou', like English 'well' prefaces, e.g., disagreement acts, rejections, non-compliances with requests, etc. See the detailed analysis of 'well' by Schiffrin (1985a).

4.Research in bilingual communities has shown that code switching can be used in dialogue to mark changes in discourse type, e.g. from lecture to discussion (Blom & Gumperz 1972; Gumperz 1976).

5.The long pause after F's ACK in example (6') underscores my argument. F gives N ample time to contribute to the completion sequence.

Notes to Chapter 6

1.Other forms of disagreement sequences exist, but they are not included in this analysis. A speaker can make a statement expressing that there is disagreement, where the disagreement act is not a reaction on what the previous speaker just said, but an initial act relating to some communication in the past. Such statements typically initiate a new topic, whereas my definition bears on disagreement sequences which are part of a current topic.

2.The terminology I use to qualify the acts in a disagreement act is the same as for completion sequences in Chapter 5.

3.Levinson also treats dispreferred acts other than disagreements, such as rejections of invitations, refusals on requests, unexpected answers to questions, etc. My analysis is only concerned with disagreements. Unlike the present study, the research on which his list is based mainly concerns data from casual conversations.

4.Note that Levinson uses the term 'mitigation' in a more restricted sense than mine, see page 86.

5.No systematic research is available on discourse markers in French and Dutch. I have relied on native speaker judgments and some empirical findings (Pander Maat, Driessen & Van Mierlo 1986; Cahiers de Linguistique Française 8, 9).

6.Cf. The Random House dictionary of the English language.

7.The 12 instances with one mitigation feature are realized by seven different strategies; the 15 instances with two features are realized by 12 different combinations of strategies; the 14 instances with three features are realized by 13 different combinations of strategies; and the ten instances with four features are realized by nine different combinations of strategies.

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Summary

This study deals with the problem of how participants in business negotiations deal with the use of a foreign language. It is assumed that business people are highly motivated to lead their discussion to their goals, and that they will, therefore, pursue the most effective means to attain these goals. It is also assumed that business people will try to be as efficient as possible. That is to say, time is a factor highly valued in their cost-benefit calculations of conversational efforts.

It is expected that the use of a foreign language will have an influence on discourse pace in the sense that solutions for particular conversational tasks will require more conversational investment than in conversations among native speaker of a single language. Still it is assumed that these participants, like all conversationalists, are guided by general conversational principles based on the assumption that people are rational agents. This means that participants in non-native speaker conversations choose the most efficient solution under the given circumstances. Chapters 2 and 3 outline the basis for these assumptions and expectations. Chapter 2 treats the literature on business negotiations and reports on perceptions of business people. It further furnishes an analysis of pauses in order to demonstrate that differences in discourse pace cannot simply be attributed to an increase in pauses or pausing time. Chapter 3 shows how time and discourse pace are accounted for in the linguistic literature. In particular it offers a basis for interpreting the expected differences in pace among native and non-native conversations in terms of conversational principles.

To investigate these expectations analyses have been carried out of real-life tape recordings of business negotiations. Three types of conversations were recorded: (1) native Dutch, (2) native French, and (3) between French and Dutch business people conducted in French. The study concentrates on the difference in discourse pace among the two native settings, on the one hand, and the so-called 'mixed' setting, on the other hand. To measure the discourse pace, analyses of three types of conversational tasks have been carried out in terms of the number of communicative acts necessary to accomplish them. The greater the number of communicative acts needed, the slower the discourse pace. The three tasks are topic change, word finding problems, and the expression of disagreement. The analyses are presented in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

The analysis of topic change does not show a convincing difference between native and mixed conversations. This leads to the conclusion that the use of a foreign language apparently has no influence on carrying out this particular discourse task.

However, the analyses of word finding problems and disagreements do support the expectations. Mixed conversations need a greater number of communicative acts than native conversations. The communicative acts which account for the increased length of a discourse sequence are of a particular kind. They are topic-less, which means that they do not add any substantial information on the content level. These acts can therefore function as buffers in the conversation. They do not only create time for processing incoming and outgoing talk, they also create places in the discourse for the interlocutors to change the course of ongoing talk, without interrupting the talk on the content level. This multiplicity of functions of topic-less acts helps to prevent misunderstanding and social friction. Slowing down the discourse pace by means of such acts is felt to be more necessary in mixed than in native conversations. This is understandable because the use of a foreign language is a possible source for misunderstandings. The use of these acts, albeit not necessarily the result of conscious choices, can be explained in terms of rational behavior. The participants put some extra effort in the discussion in order to prevent situations which would lead to communicative break-down or slow down the progress toward the ultimate discourse goals.

Samenvatting

De vraagstelling van het hier gerapporteerde onderzoek is hoe deelnemers in zakengesprekken omgaan met het gebruik van een vreemde taal. Aangenomen wordt dat zakenmensen zeer gemotiveerd zijn om de discussie naar de door hun gestelde doelen te leiden, en dat ze daarom de meest effectieve middelen zullen kiezen om die doelen te bereiken. Eveneens wordt aangenomen dat zakenmensen erop gericht zijn zo efficiënt mogelijk een gesprek te voeren. Dat wil zeggen dat zij tijd als een belangrijke factor beschouwen bij hun kosten-baten berekening in zake conversationele inspanningen.

Het is te verwachten dat het gebruik van een vreemde taal invloed zal hebben op het tempo van een gesprek in de zin dat de uitvoering van bepaalde conversationele taken meer conversationele investeringen vereist in vergelijk met gesprekken waaraan native speakers van één en dezelfde taal deelnemen. Desalniettemin wordt aangenomen dat deelnemers aan zakengesprekken, net als andere gespreksvoerders, worden geleid door algemene conversationele principes die zijn gebaseerd op de aanname dat mensen rationeel handelen. Dit betekent dat deelnemers aan non-native gesprekken onder de gegeven omstandigheden de meest efficiënte oplossing kiezen. In hoofdstukken 2 en 3 wordt de achtergrond van deze aannames en verwachtingen beschreven. Hoofdstuk 2 behandelt onderhandelingsliteratuur en gaat in op de percepties van zakenmensen omtrent internationale onderhandelingen. Er wordt verder een analyse van pauzes gegeven. Dit om te laten zien dat een verlangzaming van het gesprekstempo in non-native gesprekken niet toe te schrijven is aan een toename van de lengte van en / of het aantal pauzes. Hoofdstuk 3 beschrijft hoe in de linguïstische literatuur met begrippen als tijd en gesprekstempo wordt omgegaan. Met name wordt in dit hoofdstuk de basis gegeven waarmee de te verwachten verschillen in gesprekstempo tussen native en non-native gesprekken kunnen worden geïnterpreteerd op grond van conversationele principes.

Om de verwachtingen te onderzoeken zijn er analyses op audio-opnames van levensechte zakengesprekken uitgevoerd. De opnames bestonden uit drie typen zakengesprekken: (1) tussen Nederlandssprekende native speakers, (2) tussen Franssprekende native speakers en (3) in het Frans gevoerde gesprekken tussen Nederlanders en Fransen. Het onderzoek concentreert zich op verschillen in gesprekstempo tussen, aan de ene kant, de twee typen native gesprekken en, aan de andere kant, de zogenaamde 'gemengde' gesprekken. Om het gesprekstempo te meten zijn drie typen analyses uitgevoerd in termen van het aantal communicatieve handelingen dat nodig is om een bepaalde conversationele taak uit

te voeren. Hoe groter het aantal communicatieve handelingen, deste langzamer het gesprekstempo. De drie taken zijn themawisseling, het vinden van het juiste woord en het uitdrukken van onenigheid. De analyses zijn in hoofdstukken 4, 5 en 6 beschreven.

De analyse van themawisseling laat geen duidelijke verschillen tussen native en gemengde gesprekken zien. Dit leidt tot de conclusie dat het gebruik van een vreemde taal kennelijk geen invloed heeft op zo'n soort taak.

De analyses van woordvindingsproblemen en het uitdrukken van onenigheid, daarentegen, ondersteunen de verwachtingen. Gemengde gesprekken laten het gebruik van een groter aantal communicatieve handelingen zien dan native gesprekken. De communicatieve handeling die verantwoordelijk zijn voor de grotere lengte van gesprekssequenties zijn van een bepaald karakter. Ze zijn themaloos, hetgeen wil zeggen dat ze geen substantiële informatie op het inhoudelijk niveau van het gesprek toevoegen. Hierdoor zijn deze handelingen geschikt om als buffers te functioneren. Ze creëren niet alleen tijd voor de verwerking van gespreksbijdragen, maar ze creëren ook plaatsen in het gesprek waarop de gesprekspartner de koers van het gesprek een wending kan geven, zonder het gesprek op inhoudelijk niveau te interrumperen. Deze multifunctionaliteit van themaloze handelingen draagt ertoe bij misverstanden en sociale fricties te voorkomen. Het wordt nodig geacht het gesprekstempo door middel van zulke handelingen te verlangzamen in gemengde gesprekken. Dit is niet verbazingwekkend, omdat het gebruik van een vreemde taal de kans op misverstanden doet toenemen. Het gebruik van zulke handelingen, hetgeen niet noodzakelijkerwijs bewust dient te gebeuren, kan worden verklaard aan de hand van de ratioaliteit die aan menselijk handelen ten grondslag ligt. De deelnemers doen extra moeite om situaties te vermijden die de communicatie geheel kunnen afbreken of die de voortgang naar de uiteindelijke doelen nog erger kunnen verlangzamen.